



Your Bottom Line

Your go-to resource for timely information about personal finance, college planning and student loan management

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College Planning for Younger Students

Senior year of high school is packed with college preparation activities. There's applying for college admission, searching for and completing scholarship applications, studying for the ACT or SAT, submitting the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), taking college tours, ordering a cap and gown and more! Preparing for college, however, shouldn't wait until senior year. While some things can only be done during that final year, there are other steps younger students can take right now to help them prepare for college. Here are a few college preparation tasks students can work on today to help them plan for the future:

– **Make the Grade.** As simple as it seems, earning good grades is the best way to prepare for college. Students learn valuable skills from studying, researching and collaborating with others in their current courses that can assist with the college transition. It's also important to

remember that students apply for college admission in the first semester of their senior year. This means all years of school are important as admission officers will be reviewing students' *previous* coursework. Therefore, students should always do their best in each class.

- **Strengthen the Basics.** Assignments in college require students to utilize their reading and writing skills. Younger students can practice these skills now by reading as much as possible and writing short paragraphs about those passages. Also, younger high school students can strengthen their reading comprehension and writing skills by taking practice ACT and SAT exams. Practice material for these tests can be found on OKcollegestart.org.
- **Take the Tours.** Touring various colleges, as early as

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middle school, will give students the chance to see what type of environment they'd enjoy the best. These tours can help students narrow down their college choice during senior year.

- **Introduce Financial Aid.** Words such as “financial aid” and “FAFSA” can sound like a foreign language to many students and parents. Learn more about the language of paying for college before a student’s senior year. Two great places to search for information are FAFSA.gov and StartWithFAFSA.org. This would also be a good time to talk about scholarships and the application process. Some scholarships are open to younger students as well. Go to UCanGo2.org and OKcollegestart.org to find these opportunities. Also, use this time to discuss how college expenses will be covered for the student. Parents can learn about a college savings account by going to OK4Saving.org.
- **Talk About It.** Let students know that college is an option for them. Allow them to discuss their dream careers, then ask them to think about the type of education path they’ll need to pursue. Opening the lines of communication gives students the freedom to express their concerns and find support for their interest in going to college.

Preparing for college can begin early in a student’s academic career. Continue the college conversation and let their passion grow. For more tips on college preparation steps, go to UCanGo2.org to find college planning checklists for students in middle school and high school.

College planning has many steps and applying for financial aid can sometimes be an intimidating process, especially if it’s your first time. That’s why the Oklahoma College Assistance Program (OCAP) offers StartWithFAFSA.org, a website created to help students and parents understand financial aid and the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) process.

StartWithFASFA.org offers hundreds of articles that cover all aspects of financial aid. Categories include:

- FAFSA Completion
- Federal Student Aid (FSA) ID
- Grants and Scholarships
- Money Management
- Student Loans
- Helpful Resources and more!

StartWithFASFA.org also includes sections for frequently asked questions, FAFSA video tutorials in both English and Spanish and links to FAFSA publications and tools.

The FAFSA is used to determine how much federal and state financial aid you may be able to receive to help pay for college. Even if you don’t think you’ll qualify, it’s important to complete the FAFSA anyway. Many scholarship applications now require a completed FAFSA. Submitting a FAFSA does not automatically sign you up for student loans or commit you to any colleges, it simply gives the college(s) you’re interested in attending an opportunity to discuss your financial aid options with you. The 2020-21 FAFSA became available on October 1. High school seniors and current college students who will need financial aid next fall should complete the FAFSA as soon as possible!

StartWithFAFSA.org is a one-stop resource for any questions (and answers) related to the FAFSA.

Dressing up to go trick-or-treating has been a national tradition for more than a century. Check out the most popular costumes from the last 100 years.

1920s - Clowns

1930s - Mickey/Minnie Mouse

1940s - Witches/Cowboys

1950s - Hawaiian

1960s - Superheroes

1970s - Charlie Brown/Peanuts & Star Wars

1980s - Elvira/Hulk Hogan

1990s - Power Rangers

2000s - Harry Potter

2010s - Frozen



Source: The Chicago Tribune & The Daily Meal



Recommendation Letters for Employment Searches

David Herd, Director of Compensation & Talent Acquisition
University of Central Oklahoma

David Herd is Director of Compensation & Talent Acquisition at the University of Central Oklahoma. In this month's Q&A, Herd answers questions about recommendation letters for employment searches.

Are letters of recommendation helpful in a job search?

Letters of recommendation are helpful for sure! It shows that a candidate has taken the initiative to reach out to a colleague and asked them to put in a good word on their behalf. For anyone reviewing a candidate, this is

a positive addition—and in roles that have a lot of applicants, you want to try and stand out. Having letters of recommendation will boost you ahead of other candidates.

What should we ask for in a letter of recommendation?

Ask for details on how you worked together. What projects did you work on together? What was a particularly successful project or achievement they recognized? You really want them to focus on your strengths—are you reliable, proactive and trustworthy? These are all hard to determine from an interview alone, so someone stating these in a letter of recommendation can help convince hiring managers of these traits.

Who are the best sources for letters of recommendation?

Previous supervisors are best—these are people who have had to rely on you to get something done. They know if you turn up to work on time, whether you need lots of hand-holding and if they would recommend you for re-hire. If you can't get a letter from someone like this, then letters from colleagues on the same level or even employees you have managed can also be useful. Workplace letters are best, but if you are new to job hunting, then letters from community leaders or business owners that know you are still useful.

Recommendation Letters for College Admission

Logan Nero, Director of Recruitment
Connors State College

Logan Nero is Director of Recruitment at Connors State College. In this month's Q&A, Coffman answers questions about recommendation letters for college admission.

How important are letters of recommendation for getting into college?

Some institutions require them, others don't. But if you are applying for scholarships, you will need them. Although you may not know the college you plan to attend, don't wait until the last minute to begin requesting recommendation letters. Select your top five references ahead of time.

Share with them that you plan on attending college and will need their assistance.

Who are the best sources to ask for letters of recommendation?

Start by asking your closest teachers, coaches and administrators. They have watched you grow and develop throughout your high school years and will be able to highlight your best characteristics.

What should we ask for in a letter of recommendation?

The best way to ask for a letter of recommendation is to share with the person your goals in life and how they

may help you reach them through a letter of reference. Start with a simple email, being sure to state your full name and provide a list of which sports you play, leadership roles and academic or merit-based programs you participate in. This makes it easier for them to brag on you. Include your personal contact information with your phone number, mailing address and email. You may need to share with them what the college wants to know about you so they can include that information in the letter.

No matter what, don't procrastinate!





Money Superstitions

For many, October days conjure up images of colorful leaves and pumpkins. For others, it brings up images of ghosts, goblins and long-held superstitions. Since money is something everyone deals with, there are many superstitions related to losing or gaining money.

- **Itchy palms mean more—or less—money.** There are many different versions of this superstition and, depending on which one you believe, you could be gaining money or losing it. In most versions, if you experience itching in your right palm you will gain money—but if you scratch it you'll reverse your luck. Or if your *left* palm is itching you will experience a *loss* of money from bills or some major, unexpected reason—but some cultures say you can reverse that bad luck by scratching your “unlucky” hand on a piece of wood.
- **A spider in your pocket will keep it full of cash.** Great Britain, Australia, Portugal and Trinidad and Tobago all share this superstition. When a money spider (a small spider from the Linyphiidae family) runs over your pocket, or when you catch one and put it *in* your pocket, that pocket will never be without money. But depending on how you feel about spiders, that might just be because you don't want to put your hand back in your pocket to take the money out!
- **See a penny, pick it up, all day long you'll have good luck... or will you?** According to English folklore, if you pick up a heads-up penny you'll have good luck, but a tails-up penny will lead you to bad luck.
- **Don't whistle while you work, if you work from home.** According to a Russian superstition, whistling while under a roof can cause you to whistle away your money. In their view, money is not a carefree issue and whistling is one of the most carefree activities—so whistling in your home will cause you financial hardship.
- **Bird droppings bring great wealth.** This superstition says if a bird poops on your car, your house or even on you, you'll soon come into money. The origins of this superstition are unclear, but it has been suggested that it may be related to gold miners in the United States who discovered they could sell bird guano as fertilizer and make a fortune.

Whether or not you believe in these money superstitions, it's clear that retaining and growing wealth are important cultural concepts across the globe. Build your money management skills with tools and information available at OklahomaMoneyMatters.org.



The Oklahoma College Assistance Program, an operating division of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, provides college access and financial aid awareness, financial literacy and student loan management programs and services that benefit students, parents, schools and community partners.



OklahomaMoneyMatters.org



UCanGo2.org



OKcollegestart.org



ReadySetRepay.org



OKhigher.org