Starting on the path to college success

The University of Southern California has prepared this brochure to help you learn about the college application and admission process and determine the best subjects to take in a college-preparatory track. This information will prepare you for application and admission not only to USC, but to any other colleges or universities you may be considering.

Here are some things you can start doing now to prepare for college:

- Build your support team. School counselors and teachers can make sure you’re taking the classes you need and help keep you on track.
- Strive to earn A’s in all your courses.
- Use this brochure to make sure you’re completing the steps necessary to maximize your chances of getting into the college of your dreams, including USC.
- Create and maintain a résumé file that includes:
  - Report cards, diplomas and certificates.
  - Awards and honors you receive.
  - Your school and community activities and any offices you hold in those organizations.
  - A list of any volunteer or paid jobs you hold.

Be sure to update this file every semester.
You don’t have to be rich to attend a private university.
Students eligible for need-based financial aid may find that college is more affordable than they think. A variety of programs are available to assist with covering the cost of a USC education, from merit scholarships and grants to college savings plans and low-interest loans.

There’s not one ‘perfect’ college for you.
There are many colleges right for you. Research your options and you will find that more than one college can meet all your criteria. Visit the College Board’s Big Future website for free and accurate information about thousands of colleges and universities. bigfuture.collegeboard.org

Applying for financial aid will not necessarily affect your admission to college.
Many colleges, including USC, do not consider a family’s ability to pay when making admission decisions. This is called “need-blind” admission.

Admission counselors consider more than grades and test scores when evaluating an applicant.
USC takes a holistic approach to admission decisions. In addition to your academic record, we weigh qualities such as leadership potential, talent and personal character. We want to see how you might fit into, and contribute to, the USC community.
Financial Aid at USC

The cost of college can be offset with financial aid, which can come from your home state, the federal government, and even your college. USC administers one of the largest financial aid programs in the U.S.

**Approximately two-thirds of students at USC receive financial aid.**

Need-based financial aid is offered according to the demonstrated need of the student and family. Financial aid includes need-based grants, merit scholarships, loans and Federal Work-Study.

Merit scholarships are awarded based on a student’s academic and extracurricular achievement. For more information about USC merit and other scholarships, please visit [admission.usc.edu/scholarships](http://admission.usc.edu/scholarships).

For general information, please visit [financialaid.usc.edu](http://financialaid.usc.edu).

Standardized Testing

To learn about how tests, such as the SAT or ACT factor into your application review at USC, please visit [admission.usc.edu/test-optional-faq](http://admission.usc.edu/test-optional-faq).
What is a “college preparatory track”?

A college prep schedule requires you to take at least four college preparatory classes every year of high school.

We recommend you take:

- Courses that will challenge you. Take the most difficult courses you think you can handle. These will prepare you for universities with selective admission (those that receive more applications than they can accommodate). Push yourself, but be careful not to become overwhelmed.

- Extra classes in the subjects you excel in. Your school counselor will help you plan your schedule according to your strengths and interests.

- Classes that can help you earn college credit, such as Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate courses (if you are prepared and if your high school offers them).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Years</th>
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<tr>
<td>English and Literature</td>
<td>4 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>3–4 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foreign Language</td>
<td>2–4 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Laboratory/Natural/Physical Science</td>
<td>2–4 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>History and Social Science</td>
<td>2 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academic Electives</td>
<td>3 years</td>
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USC applicants are expected to have earned a grade of C or better in at least three years of high school mathematics, including Advanced Algebra (Algebra II). However, we recommend that students continue taking math courses beyond Advanced Algebra when possible.
9th Grade

Now that you’re in high school, preparing for college begins in earnest. Colleges will consider everything you do for the next four years, so this is your opportunity to impress.

☐ If you fall behind or have trouble in a course, ask for help. Look for a tutor, friend, counselor or parent who can help.

☐ Join clubs and organizations at your school or in your community to explore your interests and learn leadership skills.

☐ Form study groups with friends who also plan to go to college, and study together as often as possible.

10th Grade

It’s a busy year. You may be learning to drive or working at your first real job. It’s also the year you start exploring your collegiate interests and step up your academic efforts.

☐ Take on a leadership role in an extracurricular activity and participate in other activities that may interest you.

☐ Begin learning about colleges that interest you. Visit bigfuture.collegeboard.org for more information.

11th Grade

This is the year you will begin exploring what various colleges have to offer and making important choices. Make sure your grades remain strong, because this is the year colleges will examine most closely.

☐ Continue your extracurricular activities, and take the initiative to lead programs or plan activities.

☐ Attend any in-person or virtual college fairs and presentations by college representatives.

☐ Make a list of colleges you would like to apply to.

☐ Meet with the colleges that interest you the most. In-person or virtual visits will give you a firsthand look at student life and give you the chance to meet with admission staff. Visit admission.usc.edu/meet-us to see your options for learning more about USC.

☐ Stay up to date by signing up for the mailing lists of your favorite colleges.

☐ Begin looking for various scholarship opportunities offered through the colleges you’re interested in, or through outside agencies.

12th Grade

The final year of high school is when you prepare for your college experience, from application to acceptance to enrollment.

☐ A fourth year of math and a laboratory science are strongly recommended for your senior year.

☐ If your school does not offer an AP or IB curriculum, consider enrolling in a course at a local community college or university.

☐ Finalize your list of colleges that you would like to apply to.

☐ Learn more about financial aid and how to apply at financialaid.usc.edu.

☐ Continue your extracurricular activities. Find new ways to demonstrate leadership, persistence, thoughtfulness, creativity or some other special trait through your activities.

☐ Ask your teachers and counselors for recommendation letters.

☐ Complete your college essay.

☐ Meet all college application deadlines and requirements.

☐ Complete and submit applications. Submit a portfolio and/or register for an audition if you are applying to an arts program.
What should I do in the summer?

• Work as a volunteer in an area where your community needs help.
• Relax and take time off before the next academic year.
• Consider retaking a class in which you received a grade you weren’t satisfied with, or take a new class in summer school.
• Gain valuable experience and save money for college by working a part-time job or pursuing an internship in an area that interests you.
• Take part in academic enrichment programs and special summer workshops or camps in subjects that interest you. Many of these are held on college campuses. Learn more about USC’s summer programs at summer.usc.edu.

The summer before your senior year:

☐ Complete any audition tapes, art portfolios or special materials required for admission to programs in the fine and performing arts.

☐ Start working on your college essay. This will give you enough time to rewrite it before submitting it with your college applications.
Majors

USC offers undergraduates a wide array of majors, minors and interdisciplinary programs.

**Dornsiffe College of Letters, Arts and Sciences**
- American Popular Culture
- American Studies and Ethnicity
  - African American Studies
  - American Studies
  - Asian American Studies
  - Chicano/Latino Studies
- Anthropology
- Applied and Computational Mathematics
- Archaeology
- Art History
- Astronomy
- Biochemistry
- Biological Sciences
- Biophysics
- Central European Studies
- Chemistry
- Classics
- Cognitive Science
- Comparative Literature
- Computational Neuroscience
- Contemporary Latino & Latin American Studies
- Creative Writing
- Earth Sciences
- East Asian Area Studies
- East Asian Languages & Cultures
  (Chinese, Japanese, Korean)
- Economics
- Economics/Mathematics
- English
- Environmental Science & Health
- Environmental Studies
- French
- Gender and Sexuality Studies
- Geodesign
- Geological Sciences
- Global Geodesign
- Global Studies
- Health and Human Sciences
- History
- Human Biology
- Human Security and Geospatial Intelligence
- Intelligence & Cyber Operations
- International Relations
- International Relations (Global Business)
- International Relations and the Global Economy
- Italian
- Jewish Studies
- Latin American and Iberian Cultures
- Media and Politics
- Law, History and Culture
- Linguistics
- Mathematics
- Middle East Studies
- Narrative Studies
- Neuroscience
- Non-Governmental Organizations and Social Change
- Philosophy
- Philosophy, Politics & Economics
- Philosophy, Politics & Law
- Physics
- Physics/Computer Science
- Political Economy
- Political Science
- Psychology
- Quantitative Biology
- Religion
- Russian
- Sociology
- Spanish

**USC School of Architecture**
- Architecture, B.ARCH
- Architecture and Inventive Technologies, B.S *

**Iovine and Young Academy**
- Arts, Technology and the Business of Innovation

**Roski School of Art and Design**
- Art, B.A.
- Design, BFA
- Fine Arts, BFA

**Marshall School of Business**
- Accounting
- Artificial Intelligence for Business *
- Business Administration
- Business Administration/Cinematic Arts *
- Real Estate Development and Finance *
- World Bachelor in Business *

**USC School of Cinematic Arts**
- Animation + Digital Arts, BFA
- Cinema and Media Studies, B.A.
- Film and Television Production, BFA *
- Film and Television Production, B.A. (transfers only)
- Game Art, BFA
- Game Development and Interactive Design, BFA
- Media Arts + Practice, B.A.
- Themed Entertainment, BFA
- Writing for Screen & Television, BFA

**Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism**
- Communication Journalism
- Public Relations and Advertising

**Kaufman School of Dance**
- Dance, BFA

**USC School of Dramatic Arts**
- Theatre, B.A.
- Theatre (Acting for Stage and Screen), BFA
- Theatre (Musical Theatre), BFA
- Theatre (Sound Design), BFA
- Theatre (Stage Management), BFA
- Theatre (Technical Direction), BFA
- Theatre (Theatrical Design), BFA

**Viterbi School of Engineering**
- Undeclared Engineering *
- Aerospace Engineering
- Astronautical Engineering
- Biomedical Engineering
- Biomedical (Electrical)
- Biomedical (Mechanical)
- Biomedical (Molecular-Cellular)
- Chemical Engineering
- Chemical (Biological & Pharmaceutical)
- Chemical (Energy & Sustainability)
- Chemical (Materials)
- Chemical (Petroleum & Subsurface)
- Civil Engineering
- Civil (Building Science)
- Civil (Construction Engineering & Management)
- Civil (Environmental)

**Civil (Structural)**
- Civil (Water Resources)
- Computer Engineering & Computer Science
- Computer Science
- Computer Science Games
- Computer Science/Business Administration
- Electrical & Computer Engineering
- Environmental Engineering
- Industrial & Systems Engineering
- Mechanical Engineering
- Mechanical (Petroleum)

**Davis School of Gerontology**
- Human Development & Aging
- Lifespan Health

**Gould School of Law**
- Legal Studies, B.S.

**Keck School of Medicine**
- Global Health
- Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Studies

**Thornton School of Music**
- Bachelor of Music degrees: Choral Music
- Composition, Classical Jazz Studies
- (instrumental and vocal)
- Music Production
- Popular Music Performance
- Classical Performance
- (instrumental and vocal)
- Bassoon
- Cello
- Clarinet
- Classical Guitar
- Double Bass
- Flute
- French Horn
- Harp
- Oboe

**Bachelor of Science degree:**
- Music Industry

**Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy**

**Mann School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences**
- Biopharmaceutical Sciences
- Pharmacology & Drug Development

**Price School of Public Policy**
- Public Policy
- Real Estate Development
- Urban Studies and Planning

**Pre-Professional Emphases**
- Pre-Dentistry
- Pre-Law
- Pre-Medicine
- Pre-Occupational Therapy
- Pre-Pharmacy
- Pre-Physical Therapy
- Pre-Physician Assistant Practice
- Pre-Teaching

* Available to first-year applicants only.

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List accurate at time of printing. For an updated list, please refer to the USC Catalogue online at catalogue.usc.edu.