It’s Never Too Early To Plan for College
Going to college is more important than ever before. Although you won’t apply to college until high school, there are many things you can do to be ready when the time comes. So, when should you start planning for college? The answer is now!
Where will your journey lead you?
Establish good habits
Choices you make now can help you succeed in high school and prepare for college. It’s important to adopt good habits early on.

Did you know? College graduates with a bachelor’s degree earn $1 million more, on average, during their lifetime than those without a degree. Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Discover your interests
Enroll in classes and participate in community activities to help you decide what you like to do most. Once you know your interests, you can explore careers that match up.

Ask yourself questions, such as:
• Do you like helping people?
• Do you like working with your hands or designing new things?
• What are your strengths?
• What classes or activities have you found especially interesting or inspiring?

Look for summer camps that relate to things you like to do. Try job shadowing or interviewing people who have jobs you find interesting. Explore all kinds of jobs to get a good feel for what you like most.
Make the grade

Being the best student you can be will help you get into college and succeed once you’re there. Take school seriously and learn as much as you can. Getting good grades can create more opportunities for scholarships and give you more choices for where you could attend college. Working hard now will pay off in the end.

Complete these classes in high school:

- 4 units communication arts
- 4 units math
- 3 units social studies
- 3 units science
- 1 unit fine arts
- 1 unit physical education
- ½ unit health education
- ½ unit personal finance
- 7 units electives

Important! The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education requires 3 units of math to graduate high school; however, the Department of Higher Education and most Missouri colleges recommend 4 units of math to better prepare you for college. Two units of a single foreign language are strongly recommended if you are planning to attend college.

Make the most of school

1. Complete all classwork on time.
2. Get involved in activities and organizations.
3. Practice being a good leader.
4. Never give up and ask for help when you need it.
It’s never too early to start thinking about college. Talk with your children about their hopes and dreams. Help them develop their interests and skills through school work, activities and hobbies. Once they reach their final year in high school they will be ready to make some important decisions about the kind of education they need to achieve their goals.

**The benefits of college**

By 2020, approximately 66 percent of jobs in Missouri will require a degree or certificate. While not every career requires a college degree, higher education can pave the way for more employment opportunities and more options for the future. A four-year degree may not be right for everyone, but continuing education beyond high school to any level is important.

**Paying for college**

College can be expensive, but higher education doesn’t have to be out of reach due to cost. Degree and certificate programs come in a range of prices, depending on the type of school students choose and the financial aid they receive.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT: journeytocollege.mo.gov
Missouri has many affordable higher education options. The cost to attend college at a number of Missouri schools can be found at dhe.mo.gov/data/tuitionandfees.php.

Federal and state grants, scholarships, work-study, and loans are available to a majority of students to help pay for college. About 81 percent of undergraduate students receive some form of financial aid. The U.S. Department of Education and the state of Missouri offer millions of dollars in financial aid to students each year.

Visit FAFSA4caster.ed.gov today to get an estimate of the amount of federal aid your child could receive.

Saving for college
Start saving for college as early as possible. You can watch your savings grow while your children grow. Money saved through MOST 529 — a state-sponsored, college savings plan that offers tax advantages — can be used for college tuition, certain housing expenses, books, supplies and other qualifying higher education expenses. Find out more at Missourimost.org.

Missouri’s 529 Savings Plan

81% of undergraduate students receive some form of financial aid.
Source: The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)

Student Stories

Kahleigha H.
Ozarks Technical Community College
Major: Criminal Justice
“Being a first-generation college student was very scary to begin with, but it has made every victory that much more rewarding. I have had to lean on others and trust that as I continue going to school, things will come more naturally.”

Nicole A.
University of Missouri Science & Technology
Major: Computer Science & Computer Engineering
“Once you find your passion, your classes will be right in your reach and you’ll see how they relate to your future. Regardless of whether you start at a community college or a university, every field of study is a valid option as long as it fits you!”

Clayton B.
Mineral Area College
Major: International Business
“My parents encouraged me to go to college. They believe education is one of the keys to success. I worked closely with my parents to create a plan that included supplies, a computer, and the courses I would take.”