

Four Ready-to-Go Checklists You Need Before College

The transition to a college life is looming. In the movies, kids show up to their spacious dorm rooms with a few suitcases and transform the place into a magical wonderland. The reality is a bit different.

See, moving to college isn't just about the *stuff* you need. It's about the process you go through—the way you'll change yourself and your environment. And that's not small stuff.

So let's take a look at some college preparation checklists you won't find everywhere else!

College Checklist #1: Emotional Preparation

[Living in a tiny room with a stranger or two](#) probably isn't something you've experienced before. But here's a secret: It's new for everyone else, too.

Here's how to get yourself emotionally ready for college:

- Identify your goals (academic, social, personal).
- List your personal beliefs and morals so you ensure that the choices you make in college align with who you are.
- Know what activities recharge you and make plans to continue those at school by looking into groups and activities on or near campus. Check out student life pages on the college website and meetup groups in the local area.
- Build your confidence by making a list of all your accomplishments. Get your friends and family to tell you something that think is exceptional about you.
- Spend one-on-one time with family members.
- Spend one-on-one time with good friends.
- Decide on how you'll communicate with friends and family while you're at school.
- Take a spontaneous trip and experience what it's like to do something unexpected.
- Plan how you'll continue to practice your religion/faith/spirituality away from home.
- Know that you'll change because of your new experiences. Remember, sometimes change can feel uncomfortable, but that doesn't mean it's bad.

College Checklist #2: Financial Preparation

If you've had a summer job or a part-time gig while in high school, you probably have some handle on financial planning. But moving away to college may be the first time in your life that you're making financial decisions on a daily basis on your own.

Living on a budget isn't impossible, but it's easier if you've done some planning before you head off on your own. Here's how to prep while you still have some support at home:

- First off: figure out where your tuition money is coming from ([scholarships](#), grants, work study, job, parents, savings, etc.).
- [Create your budget](#) so necessary expenses are covered (books, car payments, insurance, etc.) and you know how much money is left over after expenses.
- Decide on how much you'll spend on other necessities, like food and college costs (events, fees, etc.).
- Use a banking or budgeting app to keep track of your spending.
- Stick to your budget in the months leading up to college—remember, practice makes perfect!
- Don't add to your budget every month if you have money left over. Put that money into savings and pretend it's not available.
- Look at your bank statements each month.
- If possible, see if your budget will allow you to start [paying back loans while still in school](#).

College Checklist #3: Logistical Preparation

With your mind and your wallet set right, it's time to get your brain in college preparation mode. The actual process of leaving your family home, moving into your dorm, [gathering all your supplies](#), meeting new people, attending welcome events, and getting to classes on time can be stressful.

Here are some tips to making move-in feel less like a juggling act and more like an event to remember:

- Tour the dorms before move in.
- Contact your roommate WAY ahead of time and decide who's bringing what.
- Look into stores that ship to dorms so you don't have to pack items like bedding and refrigerators.
- Know where the local stores are near the dorm for last minute forgotten items and [don't forget to ask for a college student discount!](#)
- Plan for weather during moving. Bring lots of water bottles for places that get hot and tarps for places where it rains.

- Get to the dorms as soon as you can on Arrival Day. Parking for unloading can get messy.
- Bring snacks to help you power through the move.
- Accept your family's help to move in and arrange the room. This will give you more time to say goodbyes and to attend Welcome Week events.
- Pack as light as possible, but know your situation. If you're at a rural school without a car, you'll want to bring all the small items you can think of. If you're at a school in the city or have a car, you can pick things up as needed.

College Checklist #4: The Stuff

Forgetting things is inevitable. This is where checklists can save the day.

The list below includes the day-to-day basics and then some. Going to school in Florida? Maybe you don't need snow boots. Wisconsin? Count on it.

If you want to check this list as you go, find the printable version [here](#).

Dorm Room Items

- Lamps (desk, bed)
- Hanging/string lights
- Storage options (under bed, cubes, in closet, etc.)
- Pictures/art for walls
- Calendar/dry erase/message board
- Floor cushions with covers
- Battery powered clock
- Bed risers to lift you bed higher so you can use the space underneath for storage
- Sticky hooks
- Hanging lights
- Fan/space heater
- Mirror
- Plants
- Air mattress (for when someone crashes)
- Essential oil diffuser/air freshener

Linens

- Sheets (x2)
- Towels (shower, beach)
- Washcloths/loofah
- Hand towel
- Pillows (sleeping, throw, reading)
- Mattress pad

- Foam topper
- Blankets/comforters/duvet (don't forget one that you can bring to outdoor events)
- Hangers
- Laundry basket
- Lingerie bag
- Stain remover pen
- Detergent
- Dryer sheets
- Quarters
- Shower mat
- Bathroom rug
- Iron/ironing board (if you're into wrinkle-free clothes)

School Supplies

- USB drives/external storage
- Stapler/rubber bands/tacks/tape
- Printer and paper
- Pens/pencils
- Sharpener
- Notebooks
- Folders
- Index cards
- Sticky notes
- Scissors
- Highlighters
- Ruler
- Stamps
- Envelopes
- Blank Greeting Cards

Electronics

- Laptop
- Keyboard
- Wireless mouse
- Laptop stand
- Laptop case
- E-reader
- Tablet
- Speakers
- Cords (HDMI/Ethernet)
- Power strip
- Extension cord
- MP3 player
- Headphones

- Camera
- Cell phone
- Chargers for every device
- Extra batteries

Shared with Roommate

- Stereo
- TV
- Hot plate/microwave
- Coffeemaker
- Small fridge

Bathroom/Meds

- Allergy meds
- Prescription meds
- Antacid
- Aspirin
- Vitamins
- Antidiarrheal medication
- Sterile bandages
- Antibiotic cream
- Cough drops
- Shampoo/condition/hair styling products
- Body wash/soap/facewash
- Toothpaste
- Toothbrush
- Floss
- Comb/brush
- Hair styling equipment (flat iron, curling iron, etc.)
- Razors/shaving cream
- Body/face lotions
- Cotton swabs
- Sunscreen
- Makeup
- Feminine hygiene products
- Birth control
- Hand sanitizer
- Hand mirror
- Tweezers
- Contacts/solution
- Eyeglasses
- Toilet paper
- Cold and flu meds

- Decongestant
- Bug spray
- Deodorant

Clothes

- Shower shoes (flip flips)
- Underwear
- Socks
- Pants
- Shirts
- Sweats
- Pajamas
- Slippers/house shoes/flip flops
- sweaters/sweatshirts
- Cold weather gear (hats, mittens, scarves)
- Sneakers
- Boots
- Dress shoes
- Business clothes
- Dress clothes/going out clothes
- Formal dress clothes
- Swimsuit
- Workout clothes
- Umbrella
- Backpack
- Jewelry
- Jewelry organizer
- Rain gear (poncho/boots)
- Baseball or sun hat
- Robe or spa wrap

Cleaning Items

- Paper towels
- Trash bags
- Lightbulbs
- All-purpose cleaner/cleaning wipes
- Plastic sandwich bags
- Dish soap
- Wet wipes
- Tissues
- Kitchen gear and utensils (bowl, plate, cup, mug, fork, knife, spoon)

- Kitchen utensils shared (stirring spoons, tongs, peeler, spatula, strainer)
- Water bottle
- Can opener
- Dish towel
- Oven mitt
- Mini broom with dustpan
- Small vac

Food *Check with roommate about allergies before buying

- Nuts
- Granola bars
- Soup
- Oatmeal
- Dried fruit
- Peanut butter/ nut butters
- Coffee/tea/cocoa
- Cereal
- Pretzels/chips
- Jerky
- Bottled water
- Popcorn
- Microwaveable mac and cheese
- Bread

Personal

- Yoga mat
- Journal
- Meditation pillow
- Religious texts
- Musical instruments
- Art supplies
- Books to read for fun
- Luggage for weekend travel/travel home

Documents

- Credit/debit cards
- License
- School ID
- Car registration/insurance info
- Health insurance card
- Copy of birth certificate
- Copy of social security card
- Passport
- Emergency contact list

- Financial aid information
- Class schedule
- Monthly budget
- On-campus account information (meal plans, etc.)

Safety

- Bike/bike helmet/bike lock
- Safety whistle
- Flashlight
- Pepper spray
- Dorm-sized safe

Good luck! You'll do great!