



# Bookshelf: Guides for Selecting Colleges and Majors

“Where should I go to college?” “What should I major in?” “How do I find out which schools offer which programs?” “What sort of reputation does this school have?” Students and their parents often raise questions like these during the summary discussion. Keep in mind that as aptitude test administrators, we are not trained college counselors; your school’s counseling office is still your best source for information about colleges and the application process. However, we can suggest ways in which certain aptitude patterns can indicate certain majors, approaches to learning, and even college size or type. We can also direct you to some quality sources of information about colleges, universities, and vocational schools.

Most high school and college students are familiar with some of the more well-known guides, such as Barron’s *Profiles of American Colleges*, Peterson’s *Guide to Four-Year Colleges*, Cass & Birnbaum’s *Guide to American Colleges*, Lovejoy’s *College Guide*, the *College Board College Handbook*, *The Gourman Report*, the *Fiske Guide to Colleges*, *Best Buys in College Education* by Solorzano, or *Rugg’s Recommendations on the Colleges*. There are hundreds of other college guides available that range in perspective from the very general to the very specialized. You may want to consult more than one source of information about any college in which you are interested. After doing some preliminary research in a large, general publication, try investigating your choices in other guides that have an approach that is appealing to you.

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**General information and impressions** *These include some guides that are written “by students, for students” and can give you ideas about life at various schools as seen by the students who attend them.*

- *The All-in-One College Guide*. Nemko. Discusses all aspects of the college selection process, including advice on financial aid, admissions tips, information about college majors and careers, and much more.
- *The Best 311 Colleges*. The Princeton Review. Includes the annual Student Advantage survey where students rank a variety of factors, including faculty members, the quality of student life, housing, and social activities.
- *The Insider’s Guide to the Colleges*. Edited by the staff of the Yale Daily News. This covers about three hundred schools and is based primarily on student surveys and interviews.

**Specialized guides** *Other guides can make you aware of schools that have particular features.*

- *Looking Beyond the Ivy League: Finding the College That’s Right for You and Colleges That Change Lives: 40 Schools You Should Know About Even If You’re Not a Straight-A Student*. Both by Pope. The first guide is about the advantages of small liberal-arts colleges over large universities, and the second highlights schools that select students who have a range of abilities, but may not be at the top of their class academically.
- *Cool Colleges: For the Hyper-Intelligent, Self-Directed, Late Blooming, and Just Plain Different*. Asher. Profiles distinctive schools including men’s, women’s, and minority colleges, and ones that offer unique curricula, allow students to design their own programs, or don’t give grades.
- If religious beliefs are a factor in your decision, Peterson’s *Christian Colleges and Universities* and The Princeton Review’s *Hillel Guide to Jewish Life on Campus* are just two of the available guides.
- *The College Finder: Choosing the School That’s Right for You*. Antonoff. Ranks colleges in a variety of interesting categories such as overall quality, social environment, open admissions, best for late bloomers or for aspiring artists, best balance of engineering and liberal arts, and many others.
- Other specialized guides include Peterson’s *Competitive Colleges*, *The National Review College Guide: America’s Top Liberal Arts Schools*, and Viking’s *The Public Ivys*.

**College majors** *If you are already thinking about majors as well as colleges, you may want to investigate those ideas at the same time.*

- *The College Board Guide to 150 Popular College Majors*. Has detailed descriptions of major subjects; written by professors.
- *The College Majors Handbook*. Fogg et. al. The result of a survey of 250,000 college graduates, coming from 60 different majors, about the jobs they actually ended up doing.
- *College Majors and Careers*. Phifer. Links college majors with personality traits, preferences, and related career choices. Includes descriptions of college majors as well as occupations with their educational and skill requirements.
- *How to Choose a College Major*. Andrews. Includes sections exploring interests, skills, and background. It also has descriptions of majors and discusses skills used in related jobs. Other sections list professional associations and profile real people in real jobs.

**Resources for those with learning disabilities** *For students who may have various types of learning disabilities, there are guides that address those issues. Two of these are:*

- *K & W Guide to Colleges for Students with Learning Disabilities or Attention Deficit Disorders*. Wax and Kravets.
- *Unlocking Potential: College and Other Choices for People with LD and AD/HD*. Taymans et. al.

**Alternatives to college** *A traditional, four-year college is not always the right choice for every student.*

- *Guide to Career Colleges*. Peterson’s. The Career College Association (CCA), an organization that trains students in fields such as computer applications, hospitality, and broadcasting, has compiled this guide to more than 900 degree and certificate programs.
- *But What if I Don’t Want to Go to College?* Unger. This guide discusses education programs that are alternatives to college. Covers topics such as where to get the education you need, minimum educational requirements for various fields, and starting salaries. Information is also provided by people actually in the fields.
- *You’re Certifiable*. Naftali & Naftali. Comprehensive directory of certification programs and ways to prepare for careers such as blacksmith, woodworker, fabric designer, hot air balloon pilot, antique appraiser, and many others.