

TRANSFERRING COLLEGES GUIDE

OVERVIEW

Some college students spend their entire undergraduate career at the same college, while others end up finishing their degree at a different college from where they started. The process of changing colleges is called transferring. Depending on the situation, there can be important benefits and drawbacks to transferring schools, and the decision to transfer is something you should consider carefully and discuss with your advisors, coaches, or other trusted adults before you make it.

In this guide, we will discuss how and when to transfer colleges, and what to think about as you're in the process of considering a transfer.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT TRANSFERRING:

If you have already been enrolled in college before, any application you make to a new school needs to be a transfer application, even if you don't have credits to transfer. You cannot apply to a new school as a first-time student if you've been to college before.

When you apply as a transfer student, your college grades will be an important part of whether you are accepted. Colleges usually look for at least a 2.0 GPA in order to accept a student as a transfer (and more competitive schools look for higher GPAs). If your GPA is below a 2.0 and you wish to transfer, you may need to fill out an appeal, find a second chance program (see the Starting Over section under "Common Reasons to Transfer", below) or take a semester off before you can be accepted as a transfer student.

Your GPA starts over when you transfer colleges, but you might not be able to bring all of your credits with you (particularly the credits where you earned a grade of C- or lower). Also, keep in mind that many colleges require students to take at least a certain number of credits (usually 30 or more) in residence (i.e. at that college) in order to earn a degree there. For instance, if you have 50 credits from BMCC, and you transfer to LaGuardia Community College, you would need to earn at least 30 credits at LaGuardia in order to earn a 60-credit associate degree there, even though you were just 10 credits away from graduating at BMCC.

COMMON REASONS WHY STUDENTS TRANSFER COLLEGES

2-YEAR TO 4-YEAR TRANSFERS

Whenever a student completes their associate degree and decides to move on to a 4-year college to finish their bachelor's degree, this process is technically considered a transfer.

Students can also move from a 2-year to a 4-year college without completing an associate degree - though they typically would need to finish at least one year at the community college before transferring to the 4-year college.

Students with very high GPAs at community college have a good chance of transferring to very competitive 4-year colleges if that is something they are interested in doing, even if their high school grades or SAT scores were not especially strong. Every year, Ivy League schools like Cornell and Columbia accept students who started at community colleges.

Students who complete associate degrees at CUNY are guaranteed* acceptance at a CUNY 4-year college. *(*Not necessarily guaranteed acceptance at their first choice school, depending on their performance in community college)*

Within the City University of New York (CUNY), if a student is close to finishing their associate degree, they can transfer to the 4-year college and then perform a procedural move called a **"reverse transfer"** to finish their associate degree without having to go back to the 2-year college. Information on reverse transfers can be found [here](#).

REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE:

MD was a student at LaGuardia Community College who was two classes away from completing his associate degree.

Rather than take a whole semester at LaGuardia Community College to complete the two missing classes, he decided instead to go ahead and transfer to Lehman College (a 4-year CUNY school).

Once at Lehman College, MD subsequently "reverse transferred" the credits he earned there to LaGuardia Community College so he could earn his associate degree while also making progress toward his bachelor's.

TRANSFERRING TO A DREAM SCHOOL

Many times, even students who are already attending 4-year colleges might decide that they want to attend another school that is more challenging or prestigious than the one they currently attend. If you are rejected from your dream school when you first apply as a high school student, you may get another chance to go if you get outstanding grades at another college and then apply to transfer. In some fields, a degree from a higher-ranked school can be important to getting hired (and in others, it might not matter much at all).

REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE:

RG applied to several top-tier private colleges, including his dream school Georgetown University, when he was a senior in high school, but he was rejected from all of them because his high school grades were very low during the year when he came into care.

Instead, he ended up attending Baruch College (a really good school in its own right) for his first year of college, and earned a 3.9 GPA there in his first year.

Armed with these outstanding grades, he re-applied to Georgetown as a transfer student and was accepted, transferring there for his sophomore year.

COMMON REASONS WHY STUDENTS TRANSFER COLLEGES (CONTINUED)

STARTING OVER

Sometimes students realize that they just need a change of setting in order to be successful.

Common reasons for this might include:

1. Going to college far away and realizing they need to be closer to home (or vice versa).
2. Not feeling welcome or at home at the college and wanting to find a better “fit”.
3. Having a crisis or negative experience on the campus and not feeling comfortable going back.
4. Current school is now too far away to commute to.
5. Being dismissed from your previous school and wanting to start over somewhere else.

In situations like these, it’s important to know that you don’t have to give up on college altogether - transferring can be an option.

It’s also important, particularly if your transfer is a result of academic challenges, to think about why you struggled at your previous school and make sure that you’re putting strategies in place to make sure you’re successful at the new school.

A change of scenery doesn’t always fix things on its own, but it can provide an important boost if it’s paired with other supports and strategies.

For students who previously had GPAs below a 2.0, CUNY offers several program options, including [Second Chance Admissions at BMCC](#) and [Kingsborough Community College’s New Start Program](#).

REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE:

Cara started her Freshman year at a SUNY school, but quickly realized that she was not ready to dorm so far away from New York City without the support structure available in NYC.

She withdrew from her classes at SUNY and instead joined the Dorm Project (now known as the College Choice program) in NYC, where she has earned an A average while keeping herself on-track to graduate from a CUNY 4-year college in 4 years.

THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN TRANSFERRING

Transferring colleges is a big decision, and it's important when going through the transfer process to think carefully both about the school that you're currently attending and the school that you will ultimately be going to. If you can visit the school you're thinking of transferring to, that is always a good idea. Otherwise, you should at least do some research online and talk to the school's admissions department and to people you trust.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF WHEN YOU'RE THINKING ABOUT TRANSFERRING:

Is my GPA high enough to transfer?

If your GPA is below a 2.0, you should consider staying at your current school in order to build up your GPA, or applying to a [Second Chance Program](#).

What will my support structure look like at the new school?

If the new school is far from home, who will you be able to reach out to for support? Is there someone at home that you'd want to set up a regular phone call with? Are the support programs available at the new school the same as at your previous school? If you're in an Opportunity Program, make sure to transfer into the equivalent Opportunity Program at your new school!

Does my new school have the major I want?

Different colleges have very different majors and course offerings, so you'll want to make sure that wherever you transfer, you can enroll in or continue in your desired major.

Will my credits transfer?

This is really important. When you transfer schools, the new school isn't necessarily going to accept all the credits from your old school. Typically, the new school will reject all of your credits where you earned a grade below a certain level (often any grades that were a D or below). Sometimes, they will also reject credits simply because the class doesn't match up with any of the course offerings at the new school. If you're concerned about credits transferring, it is a good idea to contact the registrar at the school you're considering transferring to in order to see how many credits would be lost in the transfer.



When you transfer schools, your GPA from the old school is not usually counted at the new school. Instead, you start with a reset GPA.

How do the schools compare to each other?

Look up both schools on collegescorecard.ed.gov to see how they compare. You might also want to look at their relative rankings if prestige is important to you.

Indicators to consider include:

- Graduation rate (higher is better!)
- Salary after graduation
- Cost of attendance/loan debt after graduation
- Diversity and demographics of the campus
- Distance from your home / ease of travel

HOW TO TRANSFER SCHOOLS

STEP 1: Talk to your college advisor and anyone else you're working with about the possibility of transferring. Research possible schools and decide whether a transfer is in your best interest.

STEP 2: Make a list of target schools and check the transfer deadlines for these schools
(if there's only one or two schools that you are considering transferring to, that's okay!)

STEP 3: Resolve any holds and balances at your current school.
It is often impossible to transfer if you have a hold on your account. This should be done before you apply.

STEP 4: Submit a transfer application.
Fall transfer deadlines usually come between January and March, and tend to be slightly later than the deadlines for first-time students. However, it's usually a good idea to submit your transfer application early, especially if you're applying to a competitive college outside the CUNY system.
Some SUNY and CUNY 2-year and 4-year offer **on the spot transfer admissions**, which you can schedule on the college's admissions website. It's important to do this before the transfer deadline as well because spaces are limited.

STEP 5: Check your email regularly for updates on your transfer request.
If your email address has changed since you applied, contact the school to update your application.

STEP 6: Accept your transfer offer, as long as you're still sure you want to transfer!
Sometimes schools require a deposit for transfer students - contact the admissions department to see if that fee can be waived.

STEP 7: Update your FAFSA application with the new school's information.
Notify any scholarships and ETV that you're transferring to a new school.

STEP 8: Check again to make sure that you don't have any holds and balances at your current school.
It's important not to leave any balances that could potentially go to collections. Return any property or library books belonging to your previous college.