

How to Finish College Fast

Whether you're trying to save money or are just eager to move on to the next step in your professional or academic career, finishing college fast may be an attractive option for you. Minimize your time in college by signing up for a fast...

Method 1 of 4:

Enrolling in a Fast Track Program



Go to a school that offers accelerated degree options. Some colleges and universities offer accelerated degrees, or fast-track programs. You can complete the typical accelerated bachelor's degree in 3 years.^[1] Accelerated associate's degrees are designed to be completed in just 1 year.^[2] Do an online search for colleges and universities that offer accelerated degrees in the field you are interested in.

1. Most accelerated degrees are highly structured, meaning that you will not have a lot of choice in which courses you take.
2. Some fast-track programs offer extra guidance and support to make sure students can successfully complete the program in the allotted time.

2.



Find out if you qualify for an accelerated degree program. In order to get into an accelerated degree program, you may need to meet some special requirements. Check with the college or university you are interested in to find out what their requirements are.

1. Some accelerated degree programs may require that you achieve a particular GPA in high school, and that you maintain a minimum GPA while you are enrolled in the program.^[3]
2. Some accelerated programs also have strict rules regarding how much you can work and how much money you can spend on living expenses. For example, you may be required to live with a parent or guardian while you are in the program, so that you don't have to work in order to afford housing.^[4]

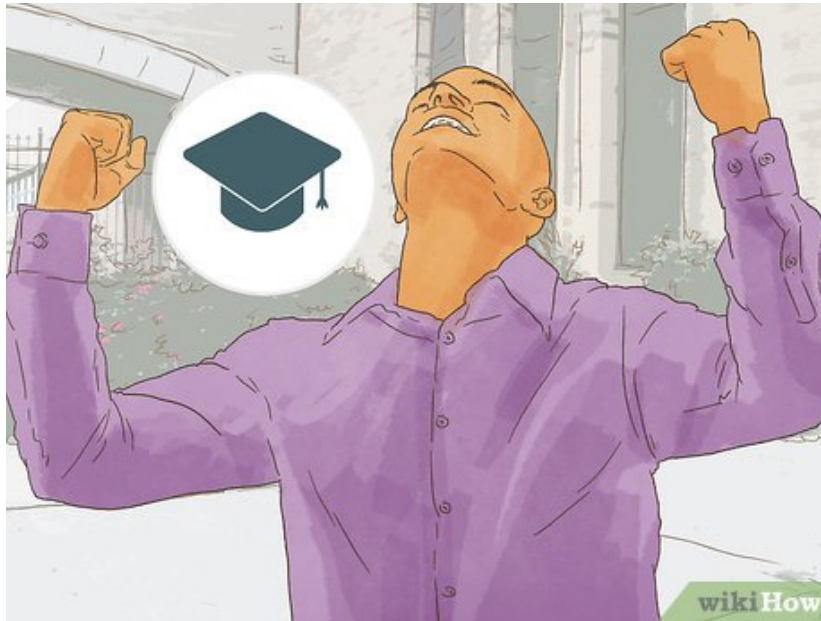
3.



Look for an accelerated program that fits your needs. While many accelerated degree programs are geared toward traditional students, there are also options for students who are older, returning to school, or trying to balance school with work and family. These programs tend to be more flexible than accelerated programs for traditional students. They may offer short-format courses that last only 5-8 weeks instead of

a full semester or quarter. Many adult accelerated programs give you the option to take courses either on campus or online.^[5]

1. To find these programs, search for schools that offer accelerated programs for 'adult' or 'continuing' learners.



4.

Consider getting an associate's degree instead of a bachelor's. The typical associate's degree can be completed in 2 years, while some accelerated associate's programs last only 1 year.^[6] Associate's degrees also have the advantage of costing less than bachelor's degrees. Low-cost associate's degrees are available at most community colleges, and at many online institutions.^[7]

1. Most associate's degree programs in the US require you to complete 60 semester credits or 90 quarter credits of coursework (about 20 classes).^[8]
2. Some universities will accept an associate's degree as credit toward completing a bachelor's degree.^[9]
3. While many employers require bachelor's degrees, there are plenty of viable career options that you can pursue with an associate's degree. For example, you might be able to land a job as a medical technician, a web developer, an occupational therapist assistant, or an engineering technician.^[10] Do some research to find out if you can get the kind of job you want with an associate's degree.

Method 2 of 4:

Completing Required Coursework Quickly

1.



Attend college classes while you're in high school. In some states, colleges and universities make courses available to students who are still in high school. This is called 'concurrent enrollment' or 'dual enrollment.'^[11] Talk to your high school guidance counselor about how to sign up for a dual or concurrent enrollment program. Do an online search to find out about dual enrollment programs near you.

1. Some dual enrollment programs require you to travel to a college campus, while others allow you to take college courses online. In some cases, university faculty may offer college-level classes at your high school or a local career center.

2.



Sign up for summer classes while you are in college. You can get through college more quickly if you take advantage of courses offered during the summer term. The summer is a great time to get 1 or 2 required courses out of the way so that you don't have to worry about them during the regular school year. ^[12]

1. If you're going to a school that charges high tuition rates for summer classes, find out if they will accept credits from courses offered at your local community college. Talk to your academic adviser before signing up for classes at another institution.^[13]
2. Summer classes tend to be condensed into a shorter period of time than regular term courses, so be prepared for a more fast-paced, intense learning experience.

3.



Take classes while you're working. If you are currently working, but plan to start college soon, you can get some requirements out of the way by taking courses designed to fit flexible schedules. Take some evening or weekend classes at your local community college, or sign up for self-paced online classes. This way, you can have some credits out of the way before you jump into a degree program.

1. Taking a few classes part-time can also help you feel better prepared for the pressure of going back to school full-time.^[14]

4.



Talk to your adviser about taking a course overload. Most colleges or universities allow their students to sign up for a maximum number of credit hours per term. However, it is often possible to get permission to take more than the maximum course load. This is one way to get your requirements out of the way faster. If you are considering signing up for extra courses on top of your regular course load, discuss this idea with your academic adviser.

1. Take care not to take on more coursework than you can handle. Taking too many courses at once can ultimately leave you feeling burnt out, and make it harder for you to complete your degree on time.^[15]

Method 3 of 4:

Testing out of Required Courses



Take Advanced Placement classes and exams in high school. AP classes and exams are a great way to earn college credit before you start college. After you complete an AP class, you can take an exam in that subject to assess your understanding of the material. A high score on an AP Exam can translate to college credit, meaning you don't have to take as many courses in college. Talk to your school guidance counselor or AP teacher about whether AP classes are right for you.^[16]

1. While there is a fee for taking an AP Exam, many high schools offer assistance for students who have trouble paying the fee. Talk to your school counselor or AP Coordinator about applying for a reduced fee.

2.



Get CLEP credits. CLEP, or the College Level Examination Program, allows you to earn college credits for things you already know. This could be knowledge that you picked up from high school, work experience, or studying on your own. In order to get CLEP credits, you will need to take a CLEP exam. Talk to your high school counselor about how to take a CLEP exam, or visit the CLEP website at <https://clep.collegeboard.org/> to find a test center near you. Before taking a CLEP exam, make sure that the college(s) you are interested in accept CLEP credits, and find out how those credits are applied.^[17]

1. The College Board offers free online courses to help you prepare for taking a CLEP exam.^[18]
2. Currently, there are 33 different CLEP exams which cover a variety of topics, including business, literature, foreign languages, math and science, and history and the social sciences.^[19]
3. There is a \$85 fee for taking each CLEP exam.^[20]

3.

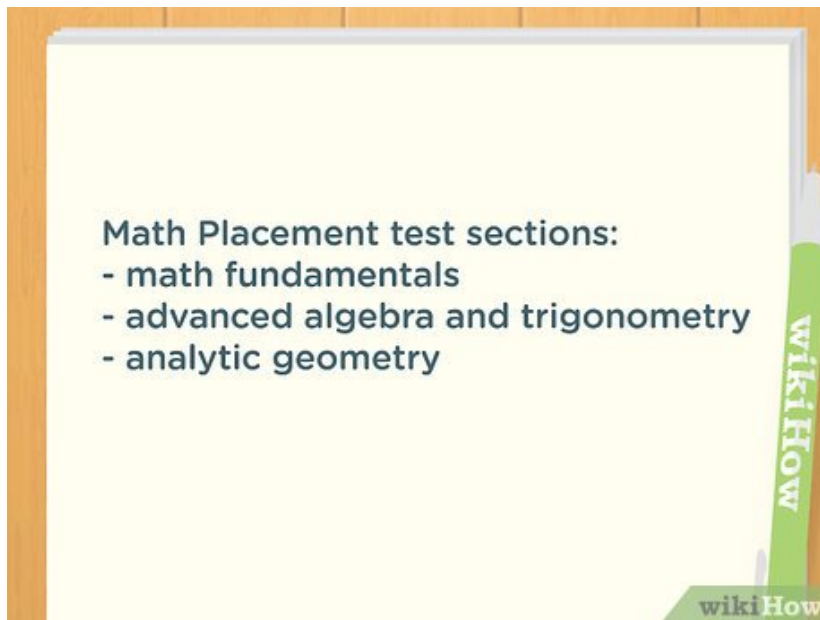


Look for schools that offer prior learning credit, if you have work experience. Some colleges or universities will offer credit for knowledge and experience that you gained from working. This is a great

option for non-traditional students who have spent time in the workforce before starting or returning to college. Prior learning credit policies vary from one school to another. Speak to an admissions officer or search your prospective school's website for information about credit for prior learning.^[21]

1. Depending on your school's policies, you may need to take an exam or create a prior learning portfolio in order to get prior learning credit.

4.



Find out if your college offers placement exams. Requirements vary from one school to another, but many colleges or universities let you 'test out' of some basic general education courses based on proficiency tests or placement exams. Placement tests usually assess your most essential skills, such as math, reading, and writing. Check with the admissions office at your college or university to find out about their placement test policies.^[22]

1. For example, if you ace the algebra portion of your math placement test, you may be able to jump straight into pre-calculus.

5.



Talk to your adviser about challenging prerequisites. If you can demonstrate sufficient background knowledge, you may be able to convince your adviser, department head, or course instructor to let you skip prerequisite courses even if there is no formal way to 'test out.' Work closely with your academic adviser to determine which courses you can skip.

1. Every school has different policies when it comes to challenging prerequisites and other course requirements. Policies may also vary from one department to another. Talk to your adviser to find out how it works in your program.

Method 4 of 4:

Minimizing your Other Commitments



Avoid working during college, if you can. Having to balance work and school is tough, and it can slow down your progress through college. Look for ways to cut costs and minimize your need to work while you're in school.^[23] For example, you might:

1. Attend an in-state school or community college, so that you can pay lower tuition rates.
2. Get an online degree or go to a school close to home, so that you don't have to worry about paying rent or campus housing fees.
3. Apply for scholarships, grants, or federal student loans to help cover the costs of tuition and fees.

2.



Cut back on extra-curricular activities. If you're trying to get through college quickly, you'll need to devote all of your time and attention to passing your required courses. This might mean missing out on participating in student organizations, social events, service opportunities, and internships.^[24] If you decide to take on activities and responsibilities outside of your regular coursework, choose carefully and try to focus on opportunities that will help you achieve your career goals.

3.



Choose your major early. Most college students end up changing their major at least once.^[25] There's nothing wrong with feeling uncertain or wanting to explore your options. However, changing your major or starting college without a major can slow you down quite a bit. If you want to get through college as fast as possible, decide on your major ahead of time and stick with it. This will help you avoid taking a bunch of courses you don't need for your degree.

4.



Focus on required coursework for your major. Taking courses you don't really need can slow down your progress through college. That elective course on medieval weaponry may sound awesome, but it might be best to skip it if it doesn't count toward your Horticulture Studies degree. Work with your adviser to make sure you are getting the most out of your credits and staying on track to graduate as efficiently as possible.^[26]

5.



Reach out to your support network. Getting support is especially important if you're struggling to balance school with other responsibilities. Ask friends, family, advisers, mentors, and fellow students to lend a helping hand sometimes so that you can get through college more efficiently.^[27]

1. For example, if you're a working parent trying to get through a college degree, ask a relative, a friend, or a fellow parent to help watch your child sometimes so that you can get homework done.
2. Some schools offer support groups for non-traditional students. Look for student clubs or campus groups for adult learners, working students, or students with families.

3. Don't be afraid to reach out to teachers, advisers, and school staff if you are struggling. Remember, it is their job to help you succeed.

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