



UNIVERSITY of
SOUTH FLORIDA

College Planning

2026 Guide



Fall 2025 Freshman Profile

● Average
GPA:
4.03-4.55

● Average
SAT Score:
1260-1410

● Average
ACT Score:
27-31

● Average
CLT Score:
86-97

This is the middle 50% of all freshmen admitted to USF, so know that this doesn't represent the admission minimum. Regardless of your scores, we still encourage you to apply! Also, scoring within the range does not guarantee you'll be accepted.

Starting to Examine Your **CHOICES FOR LIFE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL?**

If you're thinking about college, then there's no time like the present to start planning.

No matter where you are in your academic career, there are things you can do proactively to ensure you're as prepared as possible for the next big step in your life. Use this planning guide from the University of South Florida to help you as you create your pathway to higher education.

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FOUNDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

It may seem odd to start planning for college in middle school, but this is the perfect time to start establishing successful habits that can help you throughout the rest of your academic career. Nail these down during your junior high years and you'll have the foundation needed to start high school off strong.



Invest Time in Your Academic Passions

Do you love your history class, or does science speak to you? If there's a subject that you love, or that seems easier to you, then now is a great time to start learning more about it. Visit your local science museum, explore historic sites near you or ask your parents to help you find a professional who you can talk to about possible careers.



Build a Strong Foundation

Some seventh and eighth graders also start taking high school classes during middle school, like algebra or foreign languages. The grades you get in those courses will count toward your high school credits and contribute toward the foundation of your high school grades. Also, now is a great time to determine study habits that will help you learn effectively.



Find Activities That You Love

If you haven't done so already, start putting time into extracurricular activities or volunteer opportunities. These can help you discover your interests outside of school, and eventually, build a solid college resume for when you apply. Maybe you love music, you've got basketball skills or you want to help at your local animal shelter.

HIGH SCHOOL ROADMAP

High school is here — and that means it's time to buckle down and start creating a plan for the next four years so that you're prepared for the next steps after you cross that graduation stage.

Plan Your High School Schedule

To be considered for admission to USF, you need to complete a minimum of 18 approved units of high school work. Those units need to be in five core subject areas, as well as two approved electives.

Subject Area	Academic Units
English	4
Mathematics	4
Natural Science	3
Social Science	3
Foreign Language	2
Electives	2
Total Units	18

While 18 is the minimum, we recommend completing 20 total units. The applicants who are the most competitive for USF admission typically take 20 academic units or five per year.

You might have noticed that the average USF freshman in Fall 2025 has a GPA over 4.0. If you're looking to get a GPA over that, consider taking some AP, IB, AICE, or dual enrollment courses as they will boost your overall average. Colleges also measure how strong your high school schedule is when they're making admissions decisions.

AP, IB, AICE or Dual Enrollment: What's the Right Fit?

If you're considering one of these avenues for your high school courses, you'll need to know a bit about each one to determine which is best for you. Each option gives you college credit and ultimately helps you save money, but they have different requirements and paths.



Learn More

admissions.usf.edu/ap-ib-dual-enrollment

EXTRA TIPS

Along with mapping out a strong schedule, check out some other tips from USF on how to plan for success in high school.



Take the PSAT

Signing up for the PSAT is not only a great way to prepare for the SAT later on, but it's also a key part of qualifying to enter the National Merit Scholarship Program. You have to take the PSAT your junior year to qualify, but taking it in 9th and 10th grades helps you practice and gives you a good indicator of what you need to study if you need to improve your score.



Ask About the Pre-ACT

The ACT and SAT are two very different exams — but most colleges will accept scores from either one. Taking both the PSAT and the Pre-ACT will give you a good window into which test might be a better fit for you.



Consider Taking the ASVAB

The Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) test examines your aptitude and skills — and the results can measure what fields you may be successful in. Even if you're not planning on serving in the military, it is a valuable exam to take and use the results to help plan for your future.



9TH AND 10TH GRADE



Start Volunteering

Florida residents have the opportunity to earn a Bright Futures scholarship, and you need either volunteer hours or paid work hours to qualify for this opportunity.



Begin Looking at Colleges

Researching your college options is important during this stage. This gives you time to look at universities that offer the majors you're interested in and to plan your campus tours. Also, visit some college fairs and speak directly to university representatives.



Schedule Meetings With Your Counselor

One of the best people to get to know is your high school counselor. They're there to help you throughout high school and to advise you on your college choices. Meet with them regularly so they can help ensure you're on track to meet your goals.



Join School Organizations

Get involved as soon as you can with school clubs or sports. Involvement in extracurriculars, especially if you take on leadership roles, can help your college application stand out and help you develop skills you'll need to succeed in college and beyond.

Learn More About Bright Futures

If you're a Florida resident, the Bright Futures scholarship can help alleviate the cost of college tuition. Start preparing now, as you'll need to meet certain requirements to qualify.



floridabrightfutures.gov

MASTERING JUNIOR YEAR

This year may prove to be your most challenging yet, as you've likely added in more AP or dual enrollment courses. If you haven't taken the PSAT or even the Pre-ACT yet, now is the time to do it so you can get in practice and try to qualify for the National Merit Scholarship Program.

You'll also want to start taking the SAT, ACT or CLT later this year so you can see how well you do. USF and many other schools will accept a superscore for these exams, meaning we take the highest score from each section across all of your attempts. So it benefits you immensely to take these tests more than once! If you're struggling in one area, consider taking a test prep course before signing up again.

There's a lot to keep track of this year, so we've made a handy junior year checklist for you to mark off the things you've completed.

Junior Year Checklist

- ☐ Begin preparing for the SAT, ACT or CLT
 - ☐ Take the PSAT to qualify for the National Merit Scholarship Program
 - ☐ Attend college fairs
 - ☐ Schedule college campus tours
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11TH GRADE

- Research and apply for any scholarships and grants
- Look for any possible summer internships
- Make a list of important dates and deadlines for scholarships, applications and financial aid forms
- Create a resume highlighting your academic and extracurricular accomplishments
- Start asking teachers and counselors for letters of recommendation
- Brainstorm ideas for college essays and personal statements
- Make a plan to address any possible weak academic areas
- Get a Federal Student Aid (FSA) ID and start assembling financial aid documents for the FAFSA
- Create a way to keep track of all important documents and communications with colleges and universities

HERE IT IS – THE MOMENT YOU’VE ALL BEEN WAITING FOR.

Senior year has arrived, and with it comes excitement for the future and maybe also a little bit of apprehension. Make sure to set aside time for yourself and practice some self-care this year. A lot is going on and you’ll need that time to refocus and relax!



Congratulations!

Get ready to walk across that graduation stage knowing you’ve done everything you can to set yourself up for success in the next era of your life. Congratulations, and if you’ve decided to join us at USF, we can’t wait to see you on campus, future Bull!

Have USF admissions questions?

Contact admissions@usf.edu,
scan the code to find your answer.



admissions.usf.edu/admissions-faqs

What is the STARS?



admissions.usf.edu/stars

Senior Year Checklist

Here are some tips as you head into your last year of high school:

- Take the SAT/ACT/CLT again if you're not satisfied with your score
- Prepare your college application so you're ready for the Early Action deadline
- Don't let your schedule strength slip — keep up with those AP, IB, AICE or dual enrollment courses
- Start working through the Self-reported Transcript and Academic Record System
- Keep your calendar up-to-date with important dates and deadlines
- Create a Common App account
- Apply for financial aid through the FAFSA
- Continue searching for scholarships

HOW TO APPLY

APPLYING TO USF

You can apply for admission using USF's online application or the Common App. USF does not have a preference between the two, so choose whichever application you would like.

USF admission decisions are made on a rolling basis beginning in late fall as applications are completed. If you wish, you can apply to USF as early as August of your 12th-grade year. We consider freshman applications for spring, fall and summer semesters.

Applicants can sometimes get confused by the differences between each deadline, so here are common application deadlines and what they mean for you:



Early Action Deadline

This is the deadline to send in your application for priority admission. At USF, it qualifies you for perks like receiving an earlier admissions decision and priority consideration for your campus of choice.

Scholarship Deadline

Submit all of your application materials by this date to be considered for any available merit-based scholarships. These materials include test scores, your STARS record and application fees.

Supporting Materials Deadline

This is the final deadline to submit your required documents (like STARS and test scores) to the university to be considered for the term for which you're applying.

Apply in 4 Easy Steps

1

Submit Your Application

Complete the USF online application or the Common App.



2

Pay Your Application Fee

Pay the nonrefundable, \$30 application fee or submit an ACT or SAT application fee waiver to admissions@usf.edu.

3

Submit Your Self-reported Transcript and Academic Record System (STARS)

You'll list your high school courses and grades on the STARS exactly how they appear on your transcript. For U.S.-based students, this will replace the need for an official high school transcript for an admissions decision.



What is the STARS?
admissions.usf.edu/stars

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Submit Your SAT, ACT or CLT Scores

You will need to submit test scores directly from the testing service to be considered for admission.

- **SAT Code for USF:** 5828
- **ACT Code for USF:** 0761
- **CLT:** Select "University of South Florida" from CLT website dropdown.



Ready to apply to USF?

Visit our admissions site to begin the process.



admissions.usf.edu/how-to-apply

ABOUT USF

LEARN MORE ABOUT USF

At USF, we take pride in being a Preeminent State Research University.

When you're here, the work you'll do will help have a lasting impact on the Tampa Bay area, Florida and even the world. We're a proud member of the Association of American Universities, a group of the leading 3% of universities in the U.S. and Canada, and we have world-class faculty who are ready to help you leap into a fantastic academic journey.

Choose from three different campuses where you can learn and grow: Tampa, St. Petersburg or Sarasota-Manatee. Each offers a unique experience that you can only find here at USF.

At USF, you get amazing benefits whether you're at our Tampa, St. Petersburg or Sarasota-Manatee campus:

Top-Tier Faculty

In 2024, USF faculty received more than 120 national and international awards.

Exciting Campus Life

With more than 600 student-led clubs and organizations, you're sure to find something that reflects your passions.

World-Class Research

USF was awarded \$738 million in research funding in 2024 to further our groundbreaking projects.

Beautiful Location

Visit beaches, attend pro sporting events and get access to a ton of great career opportunities.

Best Value College

USF is consistently ranked as one of the best value colleges in the country. Affordable tuition, world-changing research and a strong community of friends and faculty to help you: Sounds like a winning combo!

Supportive Staff

Our staff is here to assist students in any way they can, through career services, mental health needs, tutoring and more.

Want to learn more about USF's three campuses?

Check out what it means to be a Bull at USF Tampa, USF St. Petersburg and USF Sarasota-Manatee.



admissions.usf.edu/our-campuses

NOTES

Come see why being a Bull feels right.

Check out any of our three campuses, from the urban Tampa campus to the waterfront St. Petersburg campus to the tight-knit Sarasota-Manatee campus. We can't wait to see you! Visit us in person or virtually any time.

**Schedule a
campus visit!**



admissions.usf.edu/visit-now