



**Summer Programs in the USA**  
Ideas for an Active Summer



learn—  
experience—  
explore



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# Summer Programs in the USA

## Are they for me?

Welcome to the Fulbright Greece guide, **Summer Programs in the USA**.

This guide was designed to help students and their families select the "right" summer program in the U.S. and to provide answers to frequently asked questions:

Should I attend a Summer Program?

How do I select the one best for me?

What criteria should I have in mind when I do my research?

For many college-bound high school students, summer is no longer ten weeks of total relaxation, but rather an opportunity to spend time actively working, learning new skills, or diving deeper into an area (or areas) of interest. Summer is the perfect time for students to engage in extracurricular activities and participate in pre-college programs, while building skills and enriching their life experiences. Planning is the key to finding the most rewarding experience: this guide contains a timeline for researching and applying to U.S. summer programs.

What makes this brief guide unique is that it was prepared by high school students under the guidance of the Fulbright Foundation. We wish to acknowledge the work of Eleni Samara, a graduate of Athens College, who spearheaded this project during her 2010 summer internship at the Fulbright Foundation, and Vladimir Somov, a graduate of St. Albans School in Washington D.C. and a rising freshman at Occidental College in L.A., who updated and enhanced the guide while on an e-internship in the spring of 2021.

We hope that you enjoy reading Summer Programs in the USA and that you will find it to be a helpful resource in your search for the "right" program.

**Artemis A. Zenetou**

Executive Director  
Fulbright Greece



# What is a Summer Program?

The term "summer program" usually refers to a period of study during the summer that is shorter in length than a normal semester. There are summer programs in most areas of study, from academic subjects (the arts, humanities, and sciences) to skills such as playing an instrument or a sport. Personal development and leadership skills are also major themes. Though usually sponsored by a public or private school, college, or university, summer school programs often involve a lot more hands-on learning than is offered in regular classes. Many summer programs include sports, travel, and social activities in their curricula, allowing students to pursue their interests or explore new ones in anticipation of applying to college. They also offer opportunities to work on personal development and leadership skills.

More and more summer programs are available for high school students, with unique focuses such as STEM, cultural immersion, performing arts, wilderness skills, and more. Programs are often on a college campus, sometimes formally connected with the college or university. Academic enrichment programs for teens typically run anywhere from one to ten weeks. Program costs can vary considerably. Round-trip airfare and personal expenses must also be added to the overall expenses. These programs allow students to experience life on a college campus, explore new and exciting fields they may want to pursue as college majors, and make friendships with others from around the globe. In many cases, students can earn college credit for the courses they take.



## Why should I attend a U.S. Summer Program?

Most students who attend a summer program wish to prepare themselves prior to undertaking their full-time studies in the United States or elsewhere. The summer program system gives them a taste of college life and the chance to pursue their interests. Academic credit is given to students who take rigorous courses during summer programs; such credit may count for both high-school classes and future college course selection. Summer programs look great on college applications, and students have the option of asking their summer school professors for recommendation letters. Some students attend summer programs to attain a certain level of specialized or even professional training in a specific field of study (ranging from painting and photography, creative or nonfiction writing to biomedical engineering and nanotechnology), while others simply wish to travel abroad to enjoy tourist attractions and experience another culture through education. However, for most students, the main reasons for enrolling in summer programs are to challenge themselves, experience another way of thinking, and meet new people.

**A challenging  
summer program  
can increase your  
chances of getting  
into a competitive  
college.**

Summer program courses range from painting and photography, creative or nonfiction writing to biomedical engineering and nanotechnology.

# When do I do what?

## A timeline

### Fall

**September/** This is the time to begin looking for a program. Make time to research prospective programs and their offerings and the costs involved.

**October/** Now that you have completed your research, make a list of your five favorite institutions and programs.

**November/** Meet with your college counselor or a teacher who is helping you with your applications and discuss all options.

### Winter

**December/** It would be wise to review the program's website thoroughly and, if needed, request additional information and/or clarifications. You may even opt to connect online with a program associate to discuss any questions and/or get extra feedback. If the deadlines are approaching, you should begin filling out your applications by the end of the month.

**January/** Most schools update their websites during this time of year, so check daily for new information. You should apply by the end of the month/beginning of February. (Note: some schools begin their admissions process later on, so be sure to have the correct information.)

**February/** Once you have applied and know that the school has received your application, you can relax. Wait a few weeks, and then contact the admissions office about any new information.

### Spring

**April–May/** Around this time of year, you will receive your admissions offer. If you have applied to more than one school, you should now decide where you want to go and withdraw enrollment from the rest.

### Summer

**June/** Prepare yourself for summer school. Review all information sent to you. Summer program begins.

**August/** Back home. Save all work done during summer school and stay in touch with professors, faculty, and friends.

# What criteria should I have in mind when looking for a summer program?

The following list presents the basic and most common criteria students should have in mind when researching different summer programs. Of course, the first things to consider when looking for a program are tuition and fees, financial aid packages, and the duration of the course.

## **Purpose**

- What do you want to accomplish during the program?
- What are your personal and professional goals?
- What is the program's philosophy and reputation?
- What are the unique features of the program?
- How will you be challenged?
- What are the opportunities for leadership and personal growth?
- How does the program measure and reward success?
- How would you grow from participating in this program?
- How would you be using the experience you gained from the program?

## **Faculty and professors**

- What is the education and experience level of the staff?
- How long has the staff been with the program?
- What is the ratio of counselors/teachers to students?

## **Personal preferences**

- a. The size of the program
- b. The location of the program
- c. Recreational activities, visits, free time
- d. Cost and housing
- e. Student population
- f. Coed or not
- g. Curriculum



## How do I choose the best summer program for myself?

After you finish your research, it is time to decide which program is the best fit for you. Your main focus when doing this should be the criteria listed above. If you are able to visit the schools/programs that interest you, then try to grasp each program's distinctive ambience. Since traveling to your prospective program beforehand may prove to be difficult and not cost-effective, you may want to connect with past program participants through the admissions office. Many websites today also provide a thorough overview of the campus and facilities via virtual tours. Take advantage of them.

Also, try to receive feedback from friends and family or fellow students who attended the program in previous years. This will provide you with a well-rounded and perhaps more objective view of each of your choices.

In any case, you should try to imagine yourself in the environment each program offers and picture yourself as a student there. If you feel comfortable and at home when imagining this, then your choice has been made.

## How do I choose my courses?

For a complete summer program experience, the courses that you choose should not only interest you, but also aim at fulfilling your goals. For this reason, it is imperative that you determine whether there are any courses you need or should take, and prioritize accordingly. You can also inquire as to the most popular professors and classes. Do they appeal to you? If not, then follow your instincts. Especially if the program provides a "course shopping period," do take full advantage of it to try out all the courses that seem interesting before making your final choices. Be sure to experiment! Try to find classes that will appeal to your personality and, at the same time, challenge you intellectually. You can also ask for additional advice from people who know you well (family, friends, and/or school counselors), and, of course, advice is always available at the school's admissions office.

Discuss each choice with someone you trust and know will advise you wisely.

Research is crucial in order to reach a decision. Try to thoroughly study all candidate programs, their curricula, and policies before choosing. It is also advisable to contact each admissions office.

## Insider advice, Tips,

While you should ask for other people's opinions, it's you who has the final say.

Keep in mind that just because a program is popular, doesn't mean it is the right one for you. Small or lesser known programs may provide an education of equal or even better quality than well-known ones.

Start your enrollment process as early as possible. This way you can be mentally and academically prepared. Have all forms and requirements ready by the end of January or February.

Have an open mind and a positive attitude, and allow yourself to enjoy this unique experience.

## and Suggestions

These programs can be helpful when they truly reflect students' interests, whether academic or otherwise. For example, if a student wants to be a doctor, a science-based summer program can help that student learn more about what it's like to study and practice medicine. These programs can help show colleges that a student takes a career path seriously and is genuinely interested in learning more about it.

# What if a summer program doesn't appeal to me?

Even if a summer program doesn't appeal to you, there are other ways to broaden your horizons, build up your resume, and enhance your chances for admission to a U.S. college.

## Distance learning

If you would like to keep up with schoolwork and/or learn something new, distance learning provides the opportunity to stay at home, yet still be academically active during summer vacation. Many schools and colleges offer courses that provide interesting topics and assignments.

## Summer job

Many high school students in the U.S. work over the summer. Having a job is a great way to get work experience to include on your resume and college applications. Most summer jobs for high school students are part-time, but some are full-time, especially if a student has already worked at that place before. Common summer jobs include being a cashier, grocery store stockperson, babysitter, dog walker, camp counselor, tutor, lifeguard, or working in a coffee shop or restaurant.

Like any other activity, a summer job can impress colleges when a student works at the same place over a longer time-frame and increases their responsibilities. A summer job that relates to a subject the student wants to study in college or pursue a career in often communicates to a college what the student's interests are and their level of commitment to them.

If you cannot get a summer job, you should still stay busy during the summer. You might seek other opportunities to learn and gain experience. One way would be to talk to people in different fields to learn about work environments and different jobs.

## Summer internship

Internships are very popular in the U.S. and are useful to both the intern and the employer; this guide is the product of two internships. If you want to intern during the summer months, your preparation should begin by the fall of the previous school year. Find out what types of internships exist in your area and apply to the ones you find more interesting. Although few internships are paid, you should be aware that they constitute significant work experience. Recommendation letters can also be acquired for future use.

A summer internship involves working part-time or full-time for a company or organization and is often more closely related to a student's career interests. They allow students to gain work experience, as well as learn more about careers they may be interested in. They can involve a variety of tasks, typically consistent with some of the responsibilities of an entry-level position in that field. Summer internships are not typically the entire summer, and a high school student may not always be paid for an internship.

There are virtual internships available. Think outside of the box about how you can help from a distance. Are you great with social media or product research? Do you want to help with socially-distanced advertising? Can you safely help in the office outside of business hours?



When students work in summer internships that relate to a future career area or a subject they plan to study in college, colleges often interpret that as real interest in a field. In the admissions process, schools are looking for students who are passionate about something and who are willing to go the extra mile to understand a field of interest.

## Civic engagement

Civic engagement can take many forms, from individual volunteerism and organizational involvement to electoral participation and helping local charities. Volunteers/participants usually address an issue, work within the community to solve a problem, or interact with the institutions of representative democracy.

If you wish to be actively engaged in a specific project during the summer months, the opportunities are countless. Pick an issue or problem of public concern that greatly interests you, and then find organizations that are involved in its solution. While many will accept any volunteer, others will follow a certain admissions process. This is a great opportunity for you to voice your concerns and be an active participant in the community, while at the same time gaining valuable experience.

There are many places where a student can volunteer, including schools, non-profit agencies, museums, and more. Most volunteer work is done where the student lives, but there are also opportunities to do volunteer work abroad during the summer. While volunteering is all about helping others, it's possible to choose volunteer work that relates to a student's college or career interests. Volunteering is also a wonderful way to learn leadership skills and to gain a better understanding of the larger world.

Just completing a few hours of volunteer work will not have as much impact as making a longer-term commitment to one organization. Working in a field of interest over a long period of time gives students the opportunity to make a significant impact on the organization. Hopefully over time, a student's commitment will lead to greater responsibility and possible leadership positions.

## Independent research/projects

For students hoping to attend highly selective colleges, independent research can be a fantastic avenue to delve into their academic area of interest. From developing an app to helping students stay more organized to working on writing a play or designing a robot, digging deeper into an established interest is a great way to spend part of a summer break. To be able to demonstrate this time as meaningful (and to help students stay on task), students should create a goal for themselves of what the output and/or accomplishment should be. Students should keep track of how many hours per week/weeks per summer they spend on this activity.

A student can work with a teacher or advisor to create an independent project that can count as a course credit. Another option is to reach out to a college professor to assist with college-level research. Creative projects can be submitted for contests or publication, if appropriate. If a student creates an app or an online video, being able to tout high usage numbers or a huge number of followers can be impressive.

## Useful links for locating summer programs

[www.edusaacademy.org](http://www.edusaacademy.org)

[www.summerstudyinusa.org](http://www.summerstudyinusa.org)

[www.theauss.org](http://www.theauss.org)

[www.studyusa.com](http://www.studyusa.com)

# Summer courses and pre-college programs

Many summer programs and courses have moved to an online format. As you review the examples below, you will want to consider whether you prefer a credit or non-credit program or course. Once you click on the summer programs or courses, you will need to look for the program or course in your area of interest.

## EducationUSA Academy

The EducationUSA Academy is a short-term pre-college academic enrichment program held on select U.S. college and university campuses for 15-to 17-year-old students who are foreign nationals and intermediate, advanced, or native English speakers and reside outside the United States. The Academy offers information about applying to U.S. higher education institutions, strategies for success in a U.S. academic environment, tours of diverse college and university campuses, academic English, and the opportunity for international high schools students to experience U.S. campus life. Due to the pandemic, in-person EducationUSA Academy sessions were canceled in summer 2021. However, following a successful pilot, the network

will continue to offer a virtual program option: EducationUSA Academy Connects. Through three-to-six-week programs, Academy Connects will offer similar college preparation content, but in an online format with a time commitment of 3-5 hours per week. Seven Academy host institutions are offering this program between June and August.

More details are available on the website and through these links:

**Boston University**  
**Diablo Valley College**  
**Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University**  
**St. Cloud State University**  
**St. John's University**  
**Temple University**  
**University of Colorado Boulder**

Like campus-based Academy programs, students apply to the program of their choice and pay their own program costs. Program fees vary by institution.

## STEM

### **Johns Hopkins Biomedical Engineering Innovation**

Very selective, online, a typical student is a rising junior (~35%) or senior (~65%) in high school. Talented ninth graders (rising sophomores) may be considered, but priority will be given to older students. Graduated seniors are also eligible to participate during the summer before they begin college.

Explore Engineering Innovation (EEI), formerly called Engineering Innovation, is an exciting, college-level, summer program for motivated high school students with an aptitude in math and science and an interest in (or curiosity about) engineering. Students complete hands-on projects in a variety of engineering disciplines (civil, electrical/computer, chemical, materials, and mechanical) and learn to think and problem-solve like engineers. Biomedical Engineering Innovation (BMEI) is a fully online course offered year-round that introduces biomedical engineering concepts to high school students. Participants in this course model biological systems and design experiments to test their models and use engineering principles to solve design problems that are biological, physiological, and/or medical.

Key Links

[EducationUSA Academy Webpage](#)

[EducationUSA Academy Interactive](#)

[EducationUSA Academy YouTube Playlist](#)

### **Tufts Engineering Design Lab**

Less selective, online, for students entering grades 10–12. The Engineering Design Lab (EDL) Intensive will expose students to exactly that through an engaging, two-week virtual program that culminates in a design project opportunity for students to put what they learned in the classroom into practical application.

### **Bucknell Engineering Camp**

Less selective, in person, for students who will have completed grades 7 through 11 by the summer of the camp.

### **Stanford Mathematics Camp**

Very selective, online, for students who are in 10th or 11th grade at the time of application, and who have an exceptional interest and ability in mathematics. In this three-week program, rising high school juniors and seniors engage in a deep exploration of mathematics and develop as mathematicians.

### **NYU Tandon School of Engineering**

Selective, online, for high school students who have successfully completed Algebra 2 or equivalent and have had some programming experience in any language.

NYU Tandon's Summer Program for Machine Learning is a two-week online summer program that introduces high school students to the computer science, data analyses, mathematical techniques, and logic that drive the fields of machine learning (ML) and artificial intelligence (AI).

### **UC San Diego Department of Bioengineering**

Selective, online, for students currently in grades 10–12 grade and at least 14 years of age by the start of the program. In the Bioengineering Broad Overview and

Techniques (BE-BOAT) courses, students obtain an overview of the science and engineering aspects of bioengineering and learn techniques in specialty areas. In the Bioengineering Research Orientation Workshop (BE-ROW), students explore an area of bioengineering in more depth through a guided research team project. In the Bioengineering Scholar High School Internship Project (BE-SHIP), students propose, conduct, and present a bioengineering research project in an individual setting. The project is typically suitable for a Science/Engineering Fair.

## **Writing/Humanities**

### **The Iowa Young Writers' Studio**

Selective, online, students must be enrolled in high school.

The Iowa Young Writers' Studio is a creative writing program at the University of Iowa that offers a summer residential program as well as online courses. The Studio gives promising high school-age creative writers the opportunity to share their writing with teachers and peers, receive constructive critiques, participate in writing exercises and activities, and attend (actually or virtually) readings and literary events.

### **The School of The New York Times**

Less selective, online, students must be enrolled in high school. This two-week course is designed to

develop intellectual curiosity to help students think critically about the world. Courses are taught by New York Times journalists and thought leaders from different industries who bring real-world expertise into the classroom, along with an ability to inspire young people.

### **Sewanee Young Writers Conference**

Less selective, online, for 9th, 10th, or 11th graders who are passionate about creative writing.

### **Great Books Online, Writer's Workshop**

Less selective, online, for rising students in grades 6–8 & grades 9–12. For 20 years, GBSP has gathered exceptional middle and high school students from across the world to read,



discuss, and debate selections from the greatest works of literature.

### **NYU Tisch High School Screenwriters Workshop**

Selective, online, students must be enrolled in high school. Students should be prepared to dedicate 6-10 hours per week for this course. Intensive screenwriting exercises will introduce students to the basic principles of writing for film and television. Students will develop story ideas and characters, and learn film language and script

structure. There will be film story analysis sessions with screenings of important works. The workshop sessions with the instructor and students provide an opportunity to present work, which opens dialogue for critiques and rewrites. The workshop culminates with submitted scenes, a short screenplay, and a synopsis of a feature film and television series. This is an asynchronous course with weekly assignments, video meetings, and discussions with industry professionals.

## **Business/Entrepreneurship**

### **UCLA Economics Summer Institute**

Selective, online, students must be enrolled in high school.

During the Economics Institute, students will attend or participate in lectures on economics by UCLA faculty, followed by workshops and discussion sessions led by UCLA Economics Peer Learning Facilitators as well as team-based projects based on various economics topics and issues. Students will put together weekly PowerPoint presentations.

### **UMass Entrepreneurship**

Selective, online, students must be rising sophomores–seniors. This hands-on course will guide students to see that entrepreneurship is everywhere and for everyone. Students will be given

frameworks to think about creating something new that solves a problem in the world, such as a product, a business, a nonprofit, or any new kind of organization. Working in teams, students will then begin implementing their ideas. All stages of the entrepreneurial process are covered, from gathering intel in the "real world" to pitching ideas and working with mentors to finding sources of funding. Students learn about local resources that are available to develop your enterprise, including the UMass 3D printing lab, as well as local incubators and accelerators such as Valley Venture Mentors and TechSpring in Springfield, MA.

### **MIT LaunchX**

Very selective, online, for high school students.

Join a highly-curated group of promising young entrepreneurs from around the globe to learn from industry experts, work in a group of peer co-founders, build real products, and solve business challenges in viable ways. Students will develop a real startup!

### **Wall Street 101 Camp**

Less selective, online, for rising high school juniors and seniors.

Wall Street 101 comprises a series of summer camps during June and July, held at Bentley University's world-class academic Trading Room in Waltham, MA. Each camp is a 5-day, non-residential program that provides a fun and interactive opportunity for rising high school juniors and seniors to learn

about the global financial markets.

Through simulated trading exercises, lectures on financial analysis, portfolio construction, data analytics, trading and risk management, presentations, and engagement with Wall Street professionals, students are introduced to the fascinating world of global finance and investing.

### **The Wharton Summer High School Programs**

Selective, online, for students currently enrolled in grades 9–11.

Led by Wharton faculty and instructional staff, programs explore topics that align with Wharton research and teaching. Pre-collegiate students engage with the school's rigorous business education before making a post-secondary choice, and get the chance to study and network with global peers.

# Programs with multiple areas of interest

The following offer a variety of programs geared to many interests. We encourage you to look through all options and see what resonates with you. This list is not exhaustive, and we suggest that you look at other programs in colleges across the country.

## Most selective colleges

- Brown Pre-College Summer Sessions
- Columbia University Programs for High School Students
- Georgetown Hoya Summer
- Harvard Pre-College Program
- Yale Summer Session
- Barnard College (these programs are for young women only)
- Stanford Pre-Collegiate Summer Institutes
- Cornell SCE Precollege Studies
- University of Chicago Pre-College Programs

## Other colleges

- Boston University Summer Programs
- Brandeis Pre-College Programs
- American University Summer Scholars Program
- Davidson College Summer Programs



- [Emory Summer College For High School Students](#)
- [Drexel University Summer Pre-College Programs](#)
- [James Madison University Summer Honors Institute](#)
- [Purdue Summer College for High School Students](#)
- [Syracuse University Summer Programs](#)
- [Tufts Pre-College Programs](#)
- [Putney Pre-College Programs](#)
- [University of Notre Dame Summer Scholars](#)
- [Wake Forest Pre-College Programs](#)
- [Washington University in St. Louis Summer Programs for High School Students](#)
- [Northwestern Pre-College](#)

**Other programs**

- [Summer Discovery](#)
- [NSLC Programs](#)
- [Summer Institute for the Gifted](#)

**As you review possibilities for the summer, consider these key questions to help define what you want to do.**

## **Initiative**

How much initiative does this activity or program require? For example, it takes more initiative to develop an independent project than it does to attend a summer program. Are you comfortable being more self-directed, or would you rather take part in an established program?

## **Level of Challenge**

Are you taking a risk or challenging yourself in this activity or program? Being willing to stretch and go outside your comfort zone is important to grow as a person.

## **Impact**

How will this program affect you and your community? A great activity or program should be both engaging and impactful. For many of today's college-bound high school students, summer is no longer a time of leisure, but rather an opportunity to work, volunteer, learn new skills, or explore special interests. Summer is the perfect time to take calculated risks into unfamiliar situations that build skills and enrich life experiences. Planning is the key to finding the most rewarding experience.



**We encourage students to consider what they enjoy, what areas they could improve in, and their future goals when deciding what to do over the summer.**

With any activity students choose to participate in, there should be opportunities to help them learn more about themselves by expanding their interests, gaining new experiences, or taking on responsibilities.

Whether or not it's going to help in the college process should be secondary to having a good growth experience and learning to be an active, engaged citizen.





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