

Masterman Post-Secondary Planning Guide

Class of 2026

"The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." - Lao Tzu



School Counselors- Ms. Marcus, Mr. Allen, and Mrs. Nelson

Masterman Post-Secondary Planning Guide

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Welcome letter

February 2025

Dear Masterman Juniors and Parents/Guardians,

It's time to jump into planning for life after high school! This booklet contains general guidelines about the research, activities, and procedures to follow when applying for your post-secondary education. In order to effectively navigate the college planning process you should use this guide in conjunction with information and resources you will receive from your school counselor at Masterman which includes:

- College Information Night for Juniors and Their Families
- One-on-one meeting(s) with your counselor
- Counselor presentations in Junior Seminar and Senior Seminar classes
- Xello lessons
- College admission representative visits to our school
- College fairs and virtual college visits
- Assistance with college essays and supplements
- "Step Up To College" planning guide from Heights Philadelphia
- Specific time set aside during Senior Seminar classes to work on the Common Application and research/apply to colleges and scholarships
- Financial Aid Night
- Masterman's Opportunities Bulletin and Scholarship Bulletin

Throughout the college application process you'll hear the phrase "right fit" from your school counselors. This means the school is an academic, social and financial fit that matches your specific talents, abilities, interests, grades, standardized test scores, and funding availability. It is imperative that you consider all of these factors, along with your school counselor's assistance, when considering colleges.

The college process can be daunting, but divided into smaller, manageable stages, it need not to be overwhelming or all-consuming for students and families. Remember to stay organized, use the resources the counselors provide, and ask us for help when you need it. This guide will help you manage the different stages of the process. Counselor support may include technical assistance or just a friendly person to listen if you're feeling overwhelmed. As you embark on this journey remember the importance of keeping yourself and your own goals, priorities, abilities, and interests at the center of the process. When you're focused on finding the best college or future path for YOU, the year ahead will be full of possibilities.

Parents/Guardians: be sure to make time to discuss with your child issues such as college choices, financial considerations, family considerations, and most of all, time management and careful planning.

The counselors are here and ready to provide you with support and guidance as students work towards their post-secondary goals!

Deep breaths,

Heather Marcus
School Counselor

Addy Nelson
School Counselor

James Allen
School Counselor

Options to Consider For After High School

After four years of high school, what's next? College is one option—but there are others to consider, too.

Many high schools promote college for all students—and there are some good reasons for that. Many jobs, especially those with higher salaries, require a college degree. And lots of students aren't sure what they want to do, so studying for a few more years is a good way to explore different options. But college is expensive and time-consuming—and it's far from the only path to a successful and fulfilling life.

Here are some options high schoolers should consider as they think about what to do after graduation:

1. **A four-year university** - This is what many people think of when they hear “college,” and sure, it's a great option for many kids. They'll study in their field of choice (and probably take a lot of interesting but unrelated courses, too). Plus, they'll have a ton of opportunities for extracurriculars, making friends, and gaining work and leadership experience. It's also expensive, so if a bachelor's degree is your high schooler's goal, you'll want to plan ahead.
2. **A community or "junior" college** - These are typically two-year programs that earn students an associate's degree. They can be great options for students who don't need a bachelor's degree to qualify for the kind of work they hope to do. Most students who graduate with an associate's degree will either join the workforce right away or transfer to a four-year college to earn a bachelor's degree. (They won't need to spend all four years taking courses, because they'll already have credits that they can transfer over.)
3. **A technical or vocational training program** - In some fields, like automotive mechanics, computer technology, and medical assisting, there are training programs where students can build the specific skills they need for the kinds of jobs they want in the future. These programs tend to be hands-on and offer work experience while students are learning. Sometimes vocational training programs are standalone programs (varying in length and cost), but they can also be found within community colleges. Wherever they're found, these can be great options for students who prefer to start earning an income as soon as possible.
4. **Military service or training** - Students interested in military careers have a few choices: They can enlist directly, or they can enroll in a program that will offer both a four-year degree and military instruction. Options include senior military colleges, military service academics, and maritime academies. These programs offer financial aid to students who qualify. Still another possibility is opting for a program like ROTC (Reserve Officers' Training Corps), where students attend a four-year university with a scholarship in exchange for committing to military service after graduation.
5. **A "bridge" year** - Some students aren't ready yet to decide what they want to do—and that's okay! While so-called “gap” years spent traveling or doing an unpaid internship are cost-prohibitive for many students, some newer programs offer a “bridge” year that provides funding and support to help students build college credits, improve their academic standing, and even get work experience before applying to college. These programs aren't available everywhere, but it's worth looking into if you have a teen who might benefit.

(Adapted from EdNavigator)

Masterman Counselors' Post-Secondary, Career, Scholarship, and Financial Aid Resource Guide

College and Career Search

[Masterman High School Counseling page on the Masterman website](#)- Opportunities Bulletin (summer programs, internships, etc.), Scholarship Bulletin, College News, Interesting Articles

[Xello](#)- several college planning and career assessment tools- log in to student account through philasd.org

[Heights Philadelphia- Step Up To College](#) guide - college planning guide

[College Navigator](#)- government website that provides data and statistics about colleges

[College Board](#)- SAT registration, CSS Profile, etc.

[College Board- Big Future](#)- college and career search tool

[Fair Test](#)- Colleges that do not require SAT/ACT scores- test optional and test free schools

[*Where You Go Is Not Who You'll Be: An Antidote to the College Admissions Mania*](#)
by Frank Bruni- book about staying calm and seeing the bigger picture during the college application process

[Colleges That Change Lives](#)- resources and list of liberal arts colleges known for having student-centered missions

[Undocumented Students](#)- List of colleges that meet 100% of demonstrated financial need for undocumented students

[Public University Honors](#)- information about top-rated honors programs and honors colleges

[The Public Ivies, Little Ivies, and Other Ivy League Equivalents](#)- colleges with excellent reputations that are not Ivies

[PA Career Zone](#)- learn about careers, set a goal, and make a plan

[Mapping Your Future](#)- college and career planning information

[Roadtrip Nation](#)- video interviews with a variety of professionals and career exploration tools

[The College Tour](#)- links to college tours, video episodes, and more

[Campus Tours](#)- interactive, virtual college tours

[Occupational Outlook Handbook](#)- government website with information and statistics about jobs- typical duties, work environment, education and training required, median pay, and job outlook for each occupation

Scholarships

[College Board BigFuture Scholarships](#)- earn scholarships for completing steps in the college process

[Fastweb](#)- scholarship search for college and trade schools

[Peterson's](#)- college and scholarship search tools

[Unigo](#)- scholarship search

[Student Scholarships](#)- scholarship search, articles, and tips

[Apply](#)- college and scholarship search tools

[RaiseMe](#)- earn micro-scholarships from colleges for your achievements

[Going Merry](#)- scholarship search

Financial Aid

[Types of Financial Aid](#)- Loans, Grants, and Work Study Programs

[FAFSA](#)- online form required by all colleges for federal financial aid

[Federal Student Aid Estimator](#)- government website to estimate federal student aid

[CSS Profile](#)- additional online form required by select colleges for non-federal financial aid

[Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency \(PHEAA\)](#)- PA-based financial aid- grants and loans

[FinAid!](#) – financial aid information and tips

[FinAid! College Cost Calculators](#)- tool to estimate college costs

Student-Athletes

[NCAA Eligibility Center](#)- college-bound athletes playing for Division I or Division II schools must register here

Testing

[SAT](#)- register for a test and send your test scores to colleges

[ACT](#)- register for a test and send your test scores to colleges

[Khan Academy Free SAT Prep](#)- get free, personalized SAT prep

Other Resources

[Common App Student Guides and Resources](#) - Step-By-Step Guide and tips for completing the Common Application

[College Planning Timeline](#)- for grades 9-12

[Parental Support for College Students](#)- article with tips

[Early Action, Early Decision, Rolling Admissions](#)- learn the difference between these application types

[Gap Year](#)- Plan to take a year off before starting college? Look for meaningful opportunities here.

[College Results Online](#)- information about college graduation rates

[U.S Military](#) - learn about the military branches as a possible post-secondary path

[Degree and Certificate Programs](#) at CCP

[Apprenticeship Programs](#) at CCP

[Apprentice.org](#)- find apprenticeship programs in Pennsylvania

[Best Trade Schools](#)- list of all trade, technical, and vocational programs in Pennsylvania

College Planning Timeline for Junior and Senior Years

(February of 11th Grade through June of 12th Grade)

February (11th Grade)	<p>Masterman College Information Night for Juniors – Mid-February</p> <p>Masterman Post-Secondary Planning Guide shared and reviewed by the counselors in Junior Seminar. Students can ask all the questions you want! - late February</p> <p>Continue looking at Masterman's Opportunities Bulletin for summer programs of interest</p> <p>Register for the SAT and/or ACT tests. See your counselor if you feel that you may qualify for a fee waiver.</p>
March	<p>Individual meetings with your school counselor to explore postsecondary choices and ask questions. It's important to find colleges that are a "right fit" for your individual talents, interests, and finances. Counselors also begin gathering information from you so they can write your required counselor letter of recommendation.</p>
April	<p>Individual meetings with your school counselor (continued)</p> <p>Spring Break - Opportunity to visit colleges and universities or go on virtual tours</p> <p>All juniors will create a Common Application account in Junior Seminar with the school counselors</p> <p>Begin drafting your Common Application essay if you haven't done so already</p>
May	<p>Athletes who expect to be actively recruited by Division I or II colleges should register online with the NCAA Clearinghouse</p>
June	<p>Request letters of recommendation from your teachers. Most colleges and universities require letters from 2 teachers who have taught you. (Not a teacher advisor or coach.)</p> <p>Attend the Senior Panel Night where seniors discuss their experiences during the college application and financial aid processes. - early June in the evening</p>
July – August	<p>Continue to explore/visit colleges. Also schedule college interviews when possible.</p> <p>Participate in summer programs related to your major or areas of interest</p> <p>Continue work on your applications, college essay, and supplements. We suggest 1-2 hours per week minimum. If you make a schedule and stick to it, you can complete most of the work before school starts. Do not put this off until fall. You'll be quite busy with schoolwork during your senior year and you want to make sure you also have time for fun activities.</p>
September (12th Grade)	<p>Counselors do presentations in Senior Seminar and answer questions. Seniors work on college applications and scholarship applications in class. <i>Work on applications for Rolling Admission schools first.</i></p> <p>College Representatives visit Masterman during lunchtime. Go talk to them and ask questions! A schedule of college visits is available on Xello. - September - December</p> <p>Individual meetings with your school counselor to refine college choices and add information to your counselor letter of recommendation. You can continue to ask questions as needed.</p>

	<p>Refine your list on Xello to: Reach (1-2 schools), Target (4-5 schools), and Likely (1-2 schools)</p> <p>Check in with your teachers who have agreed to write letters of recommendation for you.</p>
October	<p>SAT School Day Test- at Masterman</p> <p>Masterman Financial Aid Night</p> <p>FAFSA becomes available online</p> <p>Continue working on scholarship search and applications (refer to Masterman Scholarship Bulletin, scholarship websites, etc.)</p> <p>Check to see if your colleges require a CSS Financial Aid Profile</p>
November	<p>Early Decision and Early Action deadline for most colleges</p> <p>Check FAFSA and CSS Profile deadlines for your colleges- dates vary</p>
December	<p>Many ED and EA decisions are released.</p> <p>We recommend that all Regular Decision applications be submitted before Winter Break so you have time to relax and de-stress during your break.</p>
January	<p>Regular Decision deadline for many colleges</p> <p>Students admitted Early Decision must formally withdraw any applications submitted to other colleges as specified by the colleges</p> <p>Students deferred during Early Decision can provide updates to the college in their portal</p> <p>Begin looking for scholarships on Masterman's Scholarship Bulletin and other websites</p> <p>Graduates return to Masterman for an assembly where they give college advice to seniors</p>
February	<p>Financial Aid deadlines at most colleges. Do not miss this deadline, as it will negatively impact any award for which you might be eligible. Everyone should complete the FAFSA. Some colleges also require the CSS Profile.</p> <p>Continue to look for scholarships on Scholarship Bulletin and other websites</p>
March	Notification by some colleges to Regular Decision applicants
April	Notification by some colleges to Regular Decision applicants
May	Candidates Reply Date (5/1). Students must notify one college of intent to enroll and submit an acceptance deposit. Students must notify other colleges (where they were accepted) that they will not attend.
June	<p>In Xello, students will list the college they will be attending. Counselors will submit your final transcript.</p> <p>GRADUATION!</p>

Masterman's Brag Sheet for School Counselor Letter of Recommendation

- Please fill out this questionnaire thoughtfully. It will be used during your individual meeting with your school counselor this spring so we can assist you with college planning.
- **Counselors will also use it to write your required letter of recommendation for colleges, so the more detail you provide, the more thorough your letter of recommendation will be.**
- **To record your answers, make a copy of this Google Doc and *change the name of the new Google Doc to "[Your Name] - Brag Sheet"*. Share the completed Google Doc with your counselor when you're finished. This doc *must* be completed before you have your individual meeting with your counselor.**
- Feel free to add more lines for answers as needed. If you don't have everything figured out, that's ok! Just do your best with your answers so your counselor can see where you are and what support you may need. **We're here to help you!**

Put a link to your resume here: _____

Today's date: _____

Name: _____ Pronouns: _____ Advisory: _____

Student personal email: _____ Student cell: _____

Parent/Guardian email: _____ Parent/Guardian cell: _____

Parent/Guardian language: _____

Fee Waiver Eligible? **Put an X next to one:** ____ Yes ____ No ____ Not sure

Are you a first generation college student? (Meaning, the first generation in your family to attend college- even if you have a sibling who attends/attended college you're still first generation if your parent/guardian did not attend) ____ Yes ____ No ____ Not sure

Intended Major(s)/Career(s): _____

WHY are you interested in this Major(s)/Career(s)? Please explain in detail: What do you like about the subject? What experiences have led you to choose this major? etc. _____

Important College Criteria for you (location/size/type, etc.): _____

College(s) you're interested in: _____

If you have not yet determined a college Major or Career, have you looked at resources such as _____ [College Board \(Big Future\)](#), _____ [Xello](#) (in philasd portal), _____ [MyNextMove.org](#), or _____ [MyMajors.com](#) for ideas? **Please put an X next to all that you have attempted. If none, go check out these great resources!**

AP Courses in 11th: _____

AP Courses in 12th: _____

SAT/ACT Scores for 11th: _____

Anticipated SAT/ACT Test Dates: _____

Short Answer Questions: Please be thorough. Add more lines as needed. *Your counselor will be using this information to write your letter of recommendation. The more detailed your response, the better your letter will be and the more colleges will learn about you in this highly competitive process.*

What's your favorite subject in school? Why? If this is related to your college major, please explain. _____

List 1 or 2 extracurricular activities that are **most** important to you (sports, clubs, volunteer work, community youth group, etc.). Please explain **WHY** they are important in detail. (Ex.- how you've grown from participating, what your team members mean to you, how your participation has helped with academics, how a coach/mentor inspired you, your leadership position and how you supported your team members, favorite part of the experience, etc.)

How would you describe yourself to someone who doesn't know you? Include strengths, weaknesses, talents, hobbies, passions, things that are important to you, etc. Ask a parent/guardian and/or friends for ideas if needed. _____

What are you most proud of during your high school years? (This can include academics, extracurriculars, a job, something personal, etc.) _____

How do you respond when faced with a personal challenge? Feel free to give a specific example. How might this experience help you in the future? _____

How did you spend your summers during high school? _____

Is there anything else you'd like your counselor to know about you? _____

Teachers you're requesting Recommendation Letters from (two from 10th/11th grade):
(Consider your major BEFORE you choose teachers. Ex.- a STEM major might choose a math and a science teacher, a Communications major could choose humanities teachers, etc.)

1) _____

2) _____

Family Background:

Older siblings in College? If so, where? _____

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) attend college? If so, where? _____

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) occupation(s): _____

Thanks for sharing. It's great to learn more about you!

Ms. Marcus, Mr. Allen, and Mrs. Nelson

Application Terminology

Understanding the vocabulary of college admissions is crucial to understanding your options and their implications. Once you have developed a reasonable college list, you must decide how you wish to apply.

ROLLING ADMISSION:

- Many public universities and some private colleges make their decisions on a ROLLING basis.
- In essence, the sooner you file your application, the sooner the college evaluates your application and renders an admission decision. (Typically 6-8 weeks after receiving a complete application).
- Rolling Decisions do not have one specific deadline, typically ranging between September 1 – March 15th.
- Rolling admissions are **non-binding**.

EARLY DECISION:

- Under an EARLY DECISION plan, a student agrees to file ONE early decision application, and agrees to attend that institution if admitted.
- Early Decision applications are typically due by November 1 or November 15th.
- **Binding Decision** – if admitted, you are bound to attend that institution and may not submit applications to any other colleges or universities.
- Note that applying early decision does not prevent you from applying to rolling decision institutions.

EARLY ACTION:

- Some colleges offer an EARLY ACTION option instead of, or in addition to, Early Decision.
- Under an EARLY ACTION plan, students file their applications early in the school year (usually a November 1 or 15 deadline) and receive their admission decision in mid-December.
- **Non-Binding Decision** - if admitted, you do not have to attend and may submit applications to other colleges

REGULAR DECISION:

- Most applications are filed as REGULAR DECISION.
- Students file several applications simultaneously without obligation to attend any of them.
- Applications are typically DUE January 1 or 15, but some are due as early as December 15th or will be accepted as late as March 1st.
- Students can expect to hear an admission decision no later than April 1st.

CANDIDATES' REPLY DATE:

- May 1st is the deadline for students to reply.
- Students are expected to notify one, and ONLY one college of their decision to enroll.
- If students accept offers at more than one school, it is called a “double depositing,” and may result in BOTH colleges rescinding their original offers.
- All issues related to financial aid should be resolved prior to May 1st.

DEFERMENT (ED/EA) OR WAITLIST (REGULAR DECISION):

- Some students who apply ED/EA are deferred to Regular Decision. Some students who apply Regular Decision are put on a wait-list.
- If you get a deferral or wait-list notice, decide whether you really want to attend the school before you agree to remain on the list. If you're eventually accepted, you often get a few days to decide. Also investigate the conditions attached to being deferred or wait-listed; you may lose priority housing financial options.
- Write a letter to the admissions office as per the individual college's protocol expressing your continued interest and update any recent achievements. Being deferred or waitlisted means the school has already determined you have the academic credentials, so nonacademic factors are more likely to sway officials. Emphasize your strong desire to attend the college and use specific examples to make a case for why you are a good fit for that particular college. You can indicate that if accepted you'll enroll, but such a promise should be made only if you are absolutely certain.

Right Fit

How to Find Your Best Fit College

source: [The Princeton Review](#)

To find the right college fit for you, think about what you need in four different categories: academics, campus culture, financial aid, and career services.

For 28 years, we've surveyed students at hundreds of colleges about their experiences on campus. We've learned a lot—first and foremost, that no two students are exactly alike, and no two schools are exactly alike. That's why we publish our ranking lists and school profiles every year: to help you compare colleges and find the best college fit for your unique personality and goals.

What college is right for me?

College fit comes down to your academic, social, and financial needs, as well as your career goals.

1. Academics

Does the college you're considering offer classes and learning opportunities that interest you? You don't need to declare a college major until your junior year of college—but you're more likely to succeed if you're excited about and engaged by the options available to you. Consider your learning style: do you prefer informative lectures or lively discussions? Research and analysis or hands-on experience and practice? Writing papers or working in small groups? Look for the academic experience you'll need to feel challenged and engaged, and what support you'll need for success—peer tutoring, accessible professors, mentorship, and career services are just some of the options you might find on campus. Check out course and program descriptions, reviews of professors, and sit in on some classes if you're able to visit campus.

Assessing your chances of admission can be a good way to identify a strong academic match (and, of course, your college list of dream and safety schools!). Most admissions counselors tell us that your GPA and the caliber of your high school classes are the most important elements of your college application, with standardized test scores not far behind. Check out the average numbers of the most recent incoming class and see how you measure up. You can find those stats in our school profiles, and if you want to improve your own numbers, we have a lot of tools to help.

2. Campus Culture

Do you want a big school or a small one? A hip urban campus or a verdant quad in the country? A college where everyone cheers on the basketball team, or one where every theater production gets a standing ovation? Every college has its own special vibe.

You can start narrowing down your list by making some decisions about the size of the student body and geographical location, and then move on to aspects you can identify by visiting campus, talking to current students and trusting your gut instincts: the personalities, politics, and interests of the student body. Take quality of life into account, too, and try to check out (or read about) the dorms, food, and recreational facilities on campus.

3. Financial Aid

The [cost of college](#) is one of the biggest concerns for students, parents, counselors. We hear that from the students we work with and see it on our [College Hopes & Worries Survey](#). It's important to be realistic about your family's finances and avoid taking on unreasonable debts in the name of your education—but it's also important not to cross a school off your list because of a scary sticker price.

Many colleges and universities offer incredible financial aid packages (sometimes as a combination of grants and scholarships, which means no debt at all!). [Raising your grades](#) and your [SAT or ACT scores](#) will help you become more eligible for merit-based financial aid. And more and more data on college outcomes—that is,

career placement rates and average starting salaries—is becoming available, which can help you assess the value of investing your tuition dollars in a particular college.

4. Career Development

In addition to making sure the schools you're considering offer the majors and classes that interest you, visit or contact the career development center at each. Find out how the school supports students in preparing for the professional world. Do they offer resume writing workshops? Practice interviews? [Networking events with alumni](#)? If you foresee yourself in a particular field, location, or specific workplace, also about past students' track records of finding internships and entry-level jobs in those areas. College admission officers and career counselors are happy to highlight their institutions' success stories—as well as any unique [career launching programs](#) and experiences that their campuses offer. If you're not sure yet which direction you'll go in, see if career coaching and personal evaluations are available for students. Many institutions extend career support to alumni, too, which can be invaluable in the early post-collegiate years. As more and more students factoring post-graduate plans into their college decision process, college admission and recruitment officers are emphasizing career support and placement when pitching their schools to prospective applicants.

“College is a match to be made, not a prize to be won.” - Frank Sachs, Former President of The National Association for College Admission Counseling

Specialized Colleges

Specialized colleges focus on the needs and interests of a specific group of students. Specialized schools can be public or private, so their cost and the amount of financial aid they offer vary.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) were founded to educate African American students. Today they are open to everyone. Options to Explore: Hampton University• Howard University•Lincoln University

Women's Colleges enroll only (or mostly) women. Most are small liberal arts colleges. Options to Explore: Bryn Mawr College•Cedar Crest College• Moore College of Art and Design

Arts Colleges and Universities prepare students for careers in the visual and performing arts. Courses of study include theater, art history, fashion design, film, music, and photography. Options to Explore: Moore College of Art and Design •Savannah College of Art and Design •The University of the Arts

Technical and Trade Colleges provide academic instruction and hands-on training for a wide range of technical-based majors that prepare students for skilled employment. Options to Explore: Penn College of Technology•Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology• Williamson College of the Trades

Religiously Affiliated Colleges and Universities were founded based on principles of a religious faith. The founders' religious beliefs may be only historical or may be closely aligned with the school's academic programs and campus life. Options to Explore: Gwynedd Mercy University• Holy Family University•La Salle University•Saint Joseph's University• Villanova University

Source: Philadelphia Futures Step Up To College Guide

https://philadelphiafutures.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/CollegeGuide2019_FinalJO3.pdf

Honors Colleges and Programs

Honors and Career Success

So you are an extremely bright student, you've worked hard, taken AP courses and exams, scored in the 98th or 99th percentile on *both* the SAT and ACT—but know your chances remain slim at best for gaining acceptance to Harvard, Stanford, MIT, or Yale. You know that because the admissions process at any highly selective college at some point becomes more about what they need (geographically, ethnically, athletically, financially) than about you and what you've accomplished.

You also know that even if you are accepted by one of these schools your FAFSA shows that you would receive little or no financial aid because your parents, who don't feel or behave like they're rich, still have a combined income that means you or they will have to take out loans for you to attend.

You've always wanted to be, say, a mechanical engineer, having begun to analyze the way toys and radios and automobiles are put together since you were in elementary school or before. Maybe you feel a kinship to computers, they have given you countless hours of stimulation, satisfying a curiosity that wants to know a lot, about everything—or everything about a few things that fascinate you entirely. Maybe you started earning your own money before fifth grade, and now you wonder how the whole system of money works and how you can make it work for you. Or maybe, maybe you are a dreamer, or an adventurer, something of a risk taker, yet sensitive and observant of people, landscapes, beauty or sadness.

But no Ivy League. No Stanford. No Chicago. No MIT. Still, you want a career commensurate with your ability and proven work ethic.

Take heart, and look closely at the honors college or program at your flagship public university—or even at similar programs out of state. If it's a good one, it can be great for your education and for your career. Here's why:

1. Money: you will spend less than you would at a private university, probably get at least some merit aid regardless of your parents' income, and graduate with little or no debt. Is there a better way to start your career than to do so without a lot of debt? The absence of a debt load gives you more freedom to choose a job or a career that you love rather than one you dislike but that pays more. Or...you can take that high-paying job and keep the money for a house or a nicer apartment.
2. Your chances of graduating on time, even if you're attending a large public university, are strong. (And this saves even more money.) Priority registration, offered by most honors programs, allows you to register for the classes you need. Honors Carolina, at UNC Chapel Hill, had a *four-year* graduation rate of 95% for the class of 2012, higher than the Ivies. The average six-year rate for the 50 programs we reviewed in our book was 89%, higher than that at many prestigious private schools.
3. The people you associate with in honors will provide a solid cohort of smart, hard-working students who can reinforce your own desires to excel. They may be competitive, but not relentlessly so. On the other hand, the other students at the public university will remind you that the world is not the exclusive domain of the brilliant and the privileged. You will meet, know, like, and respect as many of these students as you will meet in honors. You will learn how to deal with all types of people, not just super-elite students who are

mostly well-to-do. Learning these people skills can be as important to your career as what you learn in class.

4. By choosing the right honors program, you will have small classes for many of your lower-division courses. You will be asked a lot of questions; you will learn how to think and respond. You will learn that all subjects have something important to offer. You will develop interests in subjects that you never thought you would care about at all. You will grow personally and intellectually. You will develop critical thinking skills that will help you immensely in your career. At a time when even *Forbes* magazine publishes a piece favorable to the liberal arts and emphasizes the career advantages of an education that is both vocational and broadening, you can get that education.

5. Many honors programs require a senior thesis. Oh no, you say, a thesis! But a thesis or capstone project is real evidence that you can deal with depth and complexity on a sustained basis. In other words, they are evidence that you can *succeed* given a tough standard to meet, not just an exam or a grade, but something you have created on your own. In the meantime, you have found mentors among professors, and they can be references for grad school or your first job. Undergraduate research that isn't necessarily related to your own thesis is a frequent option in most honors programs. Honors colleges and programs typically do well in preparing students to compete for the prestigious Goldwater Scholarships, awarded to outstanding undergraduates in the STEM disciplines.

6. Most programs also offer enhanced opportunities for internships and other forms of experiential learning—for which you can receive honors credit. In today's hit and miss hiring scene, internships are used increasingly by employers to vet potential hires without an up-front, permanent obligation. Armed with your skills from seminars and rubbing shoulders with lots of groups on campus, you will do well.

7. Many honors programs have their own study-abroad options, some of them even in technical or professional disciplines such as engineering. And—you can often get scholarship aid for these. It's a global economy, it's going to stay that way, and you can be a part of it.

8. You can probably name at least one Rhodes Scholar. Want to be one? Leading honors colleges and programs have people on staff who are designated to assist outstanding students in applying for Rhodes, Marshall, Truman, Gates Cambridge, Churchill, Boren, Udall, and Goldwater scholarships. And don't forget the Fulbright Student awards for overseas study.

9. Want to be away from home but not so far away as Palo Alto, Chicago, Ithaca, or New Haven? Either your own state or one nearby has a public honors program that you can choose. You can use the savings in travel costs to buy a car, take a gap year, or invest in something you like.

10. As *New York Times* columnist Frank Bruni *has written*, you don't have to go to a famous elite college to become the person you want to be. Know this: many of the most successful people in the nation have degrees from public universities. If cost, distance from home, concern about too much elitism, or the whims of an Ivy admissions officer lead you to a public university honors choice, you can certainly succeed.

Source: <https://publicuniversityhonors.com/honors-and-career-success/>

Also check out this list of [Public Ivies, Little Ivies, and Other Ivy League Equivalents](#).

Your List of Colleges: What Are Likely, Target, and Reach Schools?

Crafting a college list can be stressful, among other things [read: overwhelming, frustrating, time-consuming...]. While a little stress can be good because this *is* pretty important, there's no reason that building your college list should keep you up at night.

For those of you vaguely recalling a lecture from health class, yes, we're talking about the difference between *eustress* and *distress*.

One of the ways we're going to try and make this easier, leaning more towards that good type of stress, is by breaking down how many colleges you should apply to, the three college categories you need to apply from, and what else you should consider while making your college list.

Ready? Let's go!

What Are Likely, Target, and Reach Schools?

Likely, Target, and Reach are just terms we use to describe the three types of schools all students should be applying to. There's no definitive list of these colleges and universities because they vary per student — they're based entirely on *you* and your academic standing.

To determine your Likely, Target, and Reach schools, have your standardized test scores and GPA handy!

Likely schools

These are the colleges that you have a very strong (or "likely") chance of getting into. They should check off all of your other boxes (size, location, degree offering) and consistently accept students with GPAs and test scores below yours.

A word of caution here — while you want this to be on the lower end of your academic scale, they're not intended to be *below* it, necessarily. You want your college to fall within a certain academic range to ensure that you're sufficiently challenged and get out of the college what you need to.

Target schools

These are the colleges and universities that are right on the money — they fit your GPA and standardized test scores on the money. While chances of being accepted are good, there's still the possibility of being waitlisted or denied at these target schools, especially the more competitive a school is.

Reach Schools

These are the institutions that more commonly accept students with higher GPAs or standardized test scores. Notably, these schools are *not* "out of your academic range" but rather at the very top of it.

Where Do I Categorize Ivy League Schools?

Ivy League schools do not fall in any of these categories. Many lump them in with Reach schools, but that's a bit of a misplacement. Because Ivy League schools so heavily limit their student population, many very qualified students get denied, even ones identical to other students that are accepted. Because of this, it's highly encouraged to keep Ivy League institutions entirely separate from your college list.

This isn't to say that you shouldn't apply to them — do it! Submit your application! There's a chance you could fall in that small percent accepted. On top of sending in your applications to the Ivy League, though, make sure to make a list of Likely, Target, and Reach schools to apply to, as well.

How Many Colleges Should I Apply To?

Of course, the next question is how many Reach, Target, or Likely schools you should apply to or have on your list. It's recommended that students apply to an average of 7-9 schools, making sure that you have a few colleges from each category.

If you intend to apply to 7 colleges, you'll want your list to look like this:

- 2 Likely Schools
- 3 Target Schools
- 2 Reach Schools

If you want to apply to 8 schools, weight your list like this:

- 3 Likely Schools
- 3 Target Schools
- 2 Reach Schools

If you're applying to 9 schools, you can weigh your list evenly. Or, more practically, you can distribute it this way:

- 3 Likely Schools
- 4 Target Schools
- 2 Reach Schools

So to answer the question, "how many reach schools should I apply to," we say it depends on how many schools in total are on your list. No matter the number, just spread your applications out so you have your bases covered.

How to Know What Colleges to Apply To

Meet Ezra. Ezra is a current senior in high school. He doesn't particularly care where he goes to college geographically, but he knows he wants to attend a midsize school that offers a great nursing program so he can become a Nurse Practitioner.



Ezra M. - HS Senior

Graduates: 05/25

GPA: 3.7

ACT Score: 30

Intended Major: Nursing

As you can see from this card, Ezra did well in high school — he has a 3.7 GPA and earned a 30 on his ACT. Knowing this, we can create a well-rounded list of schools for Ezra to attend!

Likely Schools

Ezra has a wide option of “Likely” schools to choose from. Despite this, he still wants to stay within his academic range, not dropping too far below his GPA and ACT score. He’ll want to keep an eye on the averages of accepted students to do this.

A good option for Ezra is **Fairfield University**, which accepts students with an average ACT score of 28 and a GPA of 3.6. His marks exceed both of those numbers, but not by too much. The acceptance rate at Fairfield University is 61%, so he will also want to apply to at least two other Likely schools.

Target Schools

The **University of Portland** is a good match for Ezra’s academic history. While they have an average composite ACT score of 26, they have an average GPA of 3.7. With a 70% acceptance rate, this is also a reasonable Target institution.

Another Target school for Ezra would be **Binghamton University**, which aligns perfectly with his academic level. The average accepted student has a 30 ACT with an average GPA of 3.7. However, Binghamton is pretty competitive, only accepting 40% of students applying, so it’s important that this school is one among several others applied to.

Reach Schools

Emory University, while one of Ezra’s favorites, is considered a Reach institution. The average admitted student has a 3.8 GPA and an average composite ACT score of 32, both of which are just a bit higher than Ezra’s scores.

Ezra has a lot to consider, and likely wants to apply to the full 9 schools since his academics fall in the competitive category, which can make getting accepted dicey since many of these schools turn away perfectly good candidates yearly. Students applying to a range of schools that are less selective may opt to apply to 7 instead, since the odds lean towards being accepted.

Can You Identify Likely, Target, and Reach Schools for Yourself?

Putting together a college list is a personal process. You have to identify what type of school you want to attend, **where you want that school to be**, and the college’s degree availability before you begin identifying Likely, Target, and Reach Schools.

It’s time-consuming and can seem overwhelming, but Cappex can make it easier on you. Fill out your profile with your GPA and add a few schools. They’ll automatically be organized into Likely, Target, and Reach schools based on your academic profile! We’ll also recommend more schools so you can continue to discover new colleges and universities to consider.

Creating a well-rounded list is the ideal foundation for a good college journey! Get started today!

<https://www.cappex.com/articles/match-and-fit/list-of-colleges-likely-target-reach>

10 Ways To Learn About Colleges Online

Choosing a college is one of the biggest decisions of your life. Here are some tips to help you get to know colleges you're interested in so you can weigh the pro and cons and pick a place where you'll be happy:

1. Take a virtual tour.

In addition to basic information (e.g., campus size, number of students), college websites offer virtual campus tours. Get a closer look at different parts of the campus using interactive maps and other tools.

2. Explore Digital Profiles.

A college's website, Facebook page, and Instagram feed can tell you about campus living. Look for information on things you might want to know more about such as campus clubs and organizations, cultural events, student government, and sports .

3. Browse the Course Catalog.

Basic course information is often available in an online catalog. You can read short descriptions of all the current classes, learn about frequently offered elective courses, and find out the requirements for each major.

4. Visit the Webpage of an Academic Department.

If you want to learn about colleges, check out their posted syllabi to learn about what subjects explore and estimate a course's workload. Read about academic organizations, research opportunities, and internships. You connect with an academic advisor to learn more about your future major.

5. Investigate Support Services.

On a college's website, you can learn about the services the college provides to help its students succeed. Academic support can include tutoring, writing assistance, and study-skills courses. Other support includes help with the financial aid process, counseling, and career-planning services.

6. Look Into Housing Options.

Find out what sorts of housing options are available for first-year students as well as sophomores, juniors, and seniors. You may be able to see images of dorm rooms, group houses, and on-campus apartments.

7. Visit the Library.

Curious about how large a college's book collection is? Browse the online library catalog to find out which databases the college uses and learn how it informs new students about its services. Take a virtual spin around the library to see how comfortable it is. You may be spending a lot of time there.

8. Explore Dining Options.

College campuses offer all sorts of dining choices, such as restaurants, cafés, and dining halls. Many college websites feature menus so that you can see what kinds of food a college serves.

9. Read the Newspaper.

A college's newspaper can reveal campus issues and introduce you to a college's activities. What types of stories do current students report on? What local events get coverage? College papers can also give you a feel for the level of student thinking and writing on campus.

10. Contact Alumni and Current Students.

If you want to talk to someone who really knows a college, use online resources to look up the contact information for alumni and current students. Send emails requesting an interview or feedback. Some colleges have live chat rooms in which prospective students can mingle with current students.

What now?

When you want to learn about a specific college, use [College Search](#) to look it up and follow the link to its website. You can often find links to a college's official Facebook page and Twitter feed on its homepage. If you can't find the information you're looking for, use the site map to point you in the right direction.

Source:

<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/plan-for-college/find-your-fit/10-ways-to-learn-about-colleges-online>

College Comparison Worksheet

When researching which college to attend, there are many factors to consider – majors offered, distance from home, cost of attendance, campus size, admissions requirements, and campus activities. These factors can play an important role in deciding which college is the best choice for you. Use the template below to take notes on the characteristics of each college campus you are researching. Feel free to make multiple copies of this template, if you are researching more than 3 schools. Review all the characteristics of each college to determine your first choice, second choice, and third choice college.



****Be sure to go on the college's website to register online for your visit/tour!!!**

NAME OF COLLEGES:			
School Characteristics			
ACADEMICS	School 1	School 2	School 3
Is the college accredited?			
Public or Private?			
Faculty experience and expertise			
Programs of study (majors and minors) Is the major you're interested in offered at this campus?			
Student-to-faculty ratio and average class size			
ADMISSIONS	School 1	School 2	School 3
Admissions or placement tests needed?			
Applications forms (school, system, common, online)			
Credit for prior learning* (AP Exam Scores, College Courses)			
Deadlines to apply (early decision, early action, rolling, open)			
Selectivity (open, liberal, traditional, selective, very selective)			
Total first-year applicants			
➤ % accepted			
➤ % who actually enrolled			
➤ Average SAT or ACT			
➤ Average GPA and rank of applicants			
➤ Is this a "safe," "match," or "reach" school?			
CAMPUS ENVIRONMENT	School 1	School 2	School 3
Campus facilities, equipment and services			
➤ Computers and Internet access			
➤ Dining options			

➤ Health care			
➤ Housing (residence hall requirements)			
➤ Library			
➤ Recreational			
➤ Transportation (parking, buses, etc.)			
Campus safety			
Campus setting (urban, suburban, small town, rural) and size			
What is the size of the town the college is located in?			
Geographic location (distance from home)			
Religious affiliation			

STUDENT BODY	School 1	School 2	School 3
Number of undergraduates enrolled			
➤ % of full-time students			
➤ % of students from out-of-state			
➤ % of international students			
➤ % of students who live on campus			
➤ What is the ethnic breakdown of the student population?			
% of students who return the following year			
% of students who graduate			
% of graduates employed within one year			
COST	School 1	School 2	School 3
Application fee			
➤ Fee waiver available?			
Amount of deposit (after acceptance)			
Total annual cost of attendance			
➤ Tuition and fees			
➤ Room and board			
➤ Estimate of other required expenses (books, supplies, transportation)			
FINANCIAL AID	School 1	School 2	School 3

Financial aid availability			
➤ Grants (participates in federal and/or state grant program?)			
➤ Scholarships			
➤ Work study			
➤ Loans			
Financial aid deadline			
Financial aid forms (FAFSA, PROFILE, school)			
% of undergraduates receiving financial aid			
➤ Average amount awarded to undergraduates			
STUDENT ACTIVITIES	School 1	School 2	School 3
Athletic and/or intramural program offerings			
Campus clubs and activities			
Extracurricular organizations and events (fraternities/sororities)			
STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES	School 1	School 2	School 3
What kinds of resources are available to help you do well in your first year of college?			
Career counseling and Job placement services			
OTHER CONSIDERATIONS	School 1	School 2	School 3
Financial condition			
Honors Program / Study Abroad Program			
2-year and/or 4-year degree			
Contact Info: Admissions Office Point of Contact: Email: Phone Number:			

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS OR COMMENTS			
College Choice Ranking			

Masterman High School Counseling Department

Guidelines for College Applications

1st Step: Pre-Application

- Compile a list of colleges that you are considering. **Do thorough fit research!** (academic, financial, and social college fit)
- Meet with your counselor to discuss your choices.
- Many schools accept the [Common Application](#). You'll set up your account in one of your junior classes in the spring with the help of your counselor. Common App [rolls over](#) each year on August 1.
- In **Xello**, you must sync your Common Application and your Xello account. The counselors will do this with you in September. You access Xello by logging in to the [School District portal](#).
- Complete your [resume](#). This will help your recommenders to write your letter of recommendation.
- Ask two teachers for a letter of recommendation. You can do this before the end of junior year.
- If you're applying Early Decision or Early Action, you **must** meet with your counselor by **September 30**.

2nd Step: Teacher Recommendations

- Submit your request at least 3-4 weeks prior to the deadline. Teachers are busy. Most colleges and universities require letters from [2 teachers](#) who have taught you. (Not a teacher advisor or coach.)
- If you're using the Common Application, DO NOT invite your teachers to fill out the Teacher Evaluation form. All teacher letters of recommendation must be requested through your **Xello** account. The counselors will show you how to do this in September.
- Provide a resume so your teacher is aware of your extracurricular activities.
- Show your gratitude by writing a thank you note! Recommendations take time to craft.

3rd Step: The Application

- Complete an online draft of each application. Have a parent/guardian or your counselor review this before you submit it.
- Write the required essay/essays and have someone proofread them! Be sure your topic is appropriate and conveys information about you/personal qualities that colleges are looking for in a prospective student.
- When using the Common Application, check to see if your schools require a Common Application Supplement with additional short answer questions. Many highly selective colleges do.
- **YOU** must pay to send SAT /ACT scores from the respective testing services to your colleges:
 - [College Board](#) for SAT scores
 - [ACT](#) for ACT scores
- Masterman phone number- (215) 400-7580, Masterman CEEB Code-393356
- **Be aware of application deadlines!** Deadlines vary for different colleges, for different programs at the same college, and for scholarship consideration. Don't miss out!

4th Step: The Secondary School Report / Counselor Recommendation / Transcript

- Submit your request at least 3-4 weeks prior to the deadline. Counselors must write letters of recommendation for all seniors, so this takes time!
- If you're using the Common Application, DO NOT invite your counselor to fill out the Secondary School Report. All counselor letters of recommendation and transcripts must be requested through your **Xello** account. In Xello, you must sync your Common Application and your Xello account to make this request. The counselors will show you how to do this in September.
- Don't forget to show gratitude and say thank you.

The counselors are here to help! You got this! 😊

4 Tips To Complete College Applications On Time

By [Cole Claybourn](#) March 12, 2024, at 4:23 p.m.

With multiple components and deadlines, the [college application process](#) can be daunting for some students. Since prospective students are often juggling [college](#) applications alongside high school classes and activities, experts say it's easy to fall behind or procrastinate.

"Procrastination is a stress response, and it makes sense that some students who are anxious about the college process will avoid working on their applications in a timely fashion," Angela Warfield, principal consultant and founder of admissions consulting firm Compass Academics, wrote in an email.

"This can become a real problem if students wait too long to request transcripts, test score reports or letters of recommendation. Since the students need to rely on other people to submit these materials, they need to make sure to give those people as much time as possible to get those materials in before deadlines."

There are [some exceptions](#) where applications are accepted later, and schools that offer [rolling admissions](#) may be good last-minute options for students. But May 1 has traditionally been the decision deadline across higher education, even earning the name "College Decision Day," so students typically need to follow that timeline. If a student is applying for [early decision or early action](#), there will be even earlier deadlines to submit application materials.

A well-thought-out plan, anchored by a few organizational tips, can keep students on track with college applications. Here are four tips that experts say students can follow to complete their college applications on time.

- Start planning early.
- Create a detailed checklist.
- Ask for recommendation letters early.
- Budget time for application essays.

Start Planning Early

Because there are multiple steps involved in applying to college, many of which require help from other people, experts say the most foolproof method to alleviate anxiety is to start early.

The [Common App](#), which is used by more than 1,000 schools, opens Aug. 1 each year, meaning students can't officially submit applications through the platform until then. But those looking to get a head start can create

an account during their junior year and get familiar with the platform, says Denard Jones, lead college counselor at Empowerly, a college admissions consulting company.

And though it may not be as fun as relaxing by the pool or hanging out with friends, students would be wise to use the the [summer](#) months ahead of senior year – when they have no academic obligations – to begin or complete college application tasks, such as completing any write-ups for the extracurricular or [activities section](#), experts say.

Otherwise, "it makes the fall of your senior year that much more hard," Jones says. "Because you still have to do academic work, you still have to go through the semester, and now you're trying to pull all this information together."

Create a Detailed Checklist

Keeping track of the various application requirements and deadlines can be streamlined with a checklist. School counselors and independent college counselors can typically provide students with a checklist, and the College Board also provides [a list](#) for students and parents to use.

Universities also typically have an application checklist on their website, which may include directions or items specific to them.

If applying to multiple colleges, students and parents may also want to create a master spreadsheet or other document to keep track of deadlines and when parts of the application are complete. Setting up reminders on a digital calendar for important dates can also help, experts say.

"Dates to consider include: application deadlines, testing date/score submissions deadlines, dates for recommenders to submit letters of support and important scholarship deadlines," Warfield says.

Ask for Recommendation Letters Early

Letters of recommendation from teachers, school counselors and other sources are important to providing college admissions officers deeper context and colorful details about applicants. Like personal essays, they can help humanize applicants and give schools an idea of whether a student would succeed academically or fit in socially within their campus culture.

A [strong recommendation](#) can tip the scales in a student's favor, especially in situations where there are academic blemishes. A weak or vague letter may reflect poorly and cause an application to stand out for the wrong reasons, experts say.

Students should choose the right people to write letters, such as teachers or counselors who know them best. It's equally important to give recommendation writers [enough notice](#) so they aren't asked to craft a hastily written letter.

Richard Tench, a school counselor at [St. Albans High School](#) in West Virginia, suggests giving recommenders at least two weeks to complete the letter, but in some cases it may be wise to ask even earlier.

"That will provide them the time to say yes or no," he says, "but that also provides them the time to think about it and write a comprehensive letter."

Some teachers are pressed for time and commit to writing a limited number of recommendation letters each year. Once those spots are booked, students shouldn't be surprised if their request is denied. This could force students to pivot to a recommender who doesn't know them as well.

"The more time you give a recommender to write, the better," Jones says. "That way, hopefully it won't be this template that's just cut and paste and doesn't really help the admissions offices much."

Budget Time for Application Essays

Personal statements are often the most time-consuming and stressful part of the application process, Warfield says. But this is another area where students can get a head start during their junior year or the summer before their senior year.

The Common App typically announces [essay questions](#) for the upcoming application cycle in January or February, giving students ample time to prepare for or begin writing the essays. Warfield recommends students begin working on essays in early June, ahead of their senior year, which allows more time to edit and perfect their essays with peers or trusted mentors.

Schools that require [supplemental essays](#) vary on when those prompts are announced, but Warfield says students should start on them as early as possible and "work smarter, not harder" when completing them.

"Look for similar themes and questions where your answers aren't likely to change," such as what you want to major in or what community means to you, she says. "You can revise these essays to be school-specific, but not completely rewrite them. Don't duplicate your efforts."

Starting on [essays](#) early can be particularly helpful for students who struggle or need additional assistance with writing the essay, she says, adding that students who procrastinate may be tempted to rely on another

person or an artificial intelligence tool such as [ChatGPT](#) to write their essay. While [some colleges are using AI](#) in admissions, colleges expect the personal statement to be a student's authentic writing.

"As someone who's evaluated student writing for 30 years, it is not that hard to spot an AI-generated college essay," Warfield says. "If students try to use AI as a shortcut, colleges use AI detectors and seasoned admissions readers to detect derivative material."

This could be anything created by AI technology, and use of such language in essays could harm an applicant's admissions chances, experts say.

Source:

<https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/tips-to-complete-college-applications-on-time>

High School Resume: A Step-by-Step Guide

A resume can seem pointless when you're still in high school. You're likely imagining a stuffy document with a ton of impressive job titles and bulleted lists of important milestones at those impressive careers as long as your arm.

Approach your resume the same way you would approach a college application or scholarship application: how do you best capture your strengths to prove that you've got what it takes?

The best resumes are actually no more than a page and are carefully worded to show off your best attributes. We all have to start somewhere and your high school career (yes, career) has just as many important moments to document. It's just a matter of identifying them.

At its core, a resume is very simple, it's a one-page document showcasing *you*. Whether you're applying for your first job or your tenth, a scholarship or an undergraduate program, the idea of the resume stays exactly the same. You want to give the reader an idea of who you are and your general qualities.

High school resumes can include things like:

- Education (High School), including your GPA
- Jobs
- Clubs/Activities
- Achievements/Awards/Honors
- Projects
- Additional Skills
- Hobbies

Your resume doesn't have to include all of these sections, but we want to make the page look balanced without too much white space. If you can't think of any awards or honors, then don't include that section. If you don't have any projects that you're particularly proud of, then we won't focus on that. It's all a matter of showing what you have accomplished.

Take a look at this example high school resume and we'll break it down bit by bit.

Rachel Bean

A responsible high school student looking to further her professional experience

123 Street Drive
Chicago, IL 123456
(123) 456-7890
rbean@example.com

EDUCATION

Chicago Public School, Chicago — *High School Diploma*

September 2015 - Anticipated Graduation: June 2019

- 3.2 unweighted GPA
- AP courses in English, Biology, and History

ACTIVITIES

Creative Writing Club — *Member/President*

September 2015 - Present

- Lead weekly meetings
- Maintain reading list
- Keep time for each reading, fairly distributing time between every reader for the meeting
- Plan club events, at least one per semester

The Literary Magazine — *Reader*

October 2016 - Present

- Review all submissions for the printing of the magazine in a timely fashion
- Collaborate with fellow readers to rate and agree upon submissions

WORK EXPERIENCE

Hair Salon — *Stylists' Assistant*

July 2017 - Present

- Cheerfully greet customers and bring them to their stylist's chair
- Provide coffee or water to guests
- Prep guest for hair cuts, wash, condition, head massage
- Sweep hair, wash floors, clean entire salon each night
- Answer phones courteously and assist customers with scheduling appointments
- Close salon

SKILLS

Typing Course: 72 WPM/97% accuracy

Communication

Creative writing

Customer service

Leadership and planning

ADDITIONAL

Babysitting: the Addler family has three kids, one on the autism spectrum. The youngest is three months old.

Sunday School: I teach bible stories to two and three year olds at church.

HOBBIES

Writing

Softball

Let's grapple with the resume from top to bottom. At the very top, in the largest text size, should be your name. Your contact information should always be nearby and very visible. Include your phone number and email address, as well as general location. You can put your entire address if you want, but all that's required is the town and state you live in.

If you haven't already, now is a good time to make a professional email address. Make it some combination of your first/middle/last name and tack on some numbers if necessary. This is the email you'll want to use on your resume, when emailing potential employers, and for communicating with schools.

You can also choose to include an objective or summary. Sort of like a tagline, it lets the person reading know your primary goal. This can be very general, or you can change it based upon where you're submitting your resume.

The next section should be one of two options: either your high school information or most recent job/internship experience. A quick tip for figuring out which you should choose is to determine what is more relevant to what you're applying for and ranking the importance.

In this resume, for instance, if they were applying for a job at a different salon, that work experience should be put first since it's the most relevant. If the job was for an internship at a publishing company, the high school information should go first, followed by the Activities section.

So, the first two things you should ask yourself are:

1. Why am I making this high school resume?
2. What will showcase my abilities for them the best?

Once you've determined what's most important, we can build your resume around it. Let's assume that your high school information is going first and build out from there! For the high school section of your resume, include the full name, the town of your high school, and the expected graduation date. Include your GPA if it's a 3.0 or above and then make sure to highlight any special courses you take; AP, Honors, and Dual Credit are all great to document.

Next, is your job or activities experience more relevant? If, like in the example, it's your activities, then that should be your next section. What do you do other than go to school and don't say "nothing." You don't power down after the final bell rings and automatically restart right before first hour.

Do you play a sport? Participate in a theater? Are you part of a club or organization? All of those activities you listed in your head in response to those questions are bullet points on your high school resume. List them all, your position, and the duties that come along with it. If you're a member of the group, don't forget that attendance, participation, and dedication is always worth mentioning.

Finally, no one is expecting a student between the ages of 14-18 to have extensive (if any) work experience. What they *are* expecting is to glean some sort of substance. If you've worked at the local cafe for a year, they can tell you're responsible and likely have good customer service skills. On the other hand, if you've been on the school soccer team for three years, they know you're dedicated and follow through on commitments. There are a lot of ways to show your personality, and here are a few you may not have thought of:

- Babysitting
- Mowing lawns
- Pet sitting
- Participating in church functions
- Community service
- Having your own blog/YouTube channel
- Popular social media accounts

You can choose to list some skills to highlight specific bits about your resume. Typically, you'll want to use a mix of soft and hard skills. **Soft skills** aren't easily measurable. Examples include being a good listener, engaging in small talk, or getting along with others. **Hard skills** are measurable, such as words per minute when typing or the ability to use a program, such as the Adobe suite.

You can find a number of great, free templates that are easy to work with for your high school resume. There are some on Microsoft Word, Pages and on Google Docs. They're already formatted and are generally accepted resume shapes, so it's good to start with those. At this point, keeping your resume simple and clean is a good rule of thumb. The example above is a Google Docs template, which can be found in the Resume section. This one is called "Serif."

At the end of the day, after you submitted your resume, when all is said and done, half of the battle is taking the time to do it. Be proud of what you've accomplished and advocate for yourself. After all, you want the job/internship/scholarship, so show that you deserve it!

Source: <https://www.cappex.com/articles/applications/high-school-resume-step-by-step>

ACT vs. SAT: How to Decide Which Test to Take

The goals of the ACT and SAT are the same: to gauge readiness for college.

By Josh Moody

March 10, 2021

When it comes to the ACT vs. the SAT, both exams are widely accepted by U.S. [colleges](#), which often prompts students to ask: Which test should I take?

The answer to that question lies in understanding the differences between the two tests.

Both college admissions exams remain popular even as the coronavirus pandemic has prompted many colleges to go [test-optional](#) and temporarily deemphasize these exams in admissions considerations. In the class of 2020, nearly 2.2 million test-takers completed the SAT at least once while about 1.7 million students took the ACT. It is unclear how many students took both, but experts say it is common for test-takers to do so.

"More and more students in the last five to 10 years are taking both," says Joe Korfmacher, a former counselor at a New York high school and current director of college counseling at a New York office of Collegewise, an admissions consulting company.

The idea behind both exams is similar: to demonstrate college readiness. But despite similar aims, the tests vary in structure and timing as well as the content matter and scoring.

The SAT is offered by the not-for-profit College Board, which also offers Advanced Placement courses and other testing services. The nonprofit ACT organization is more limited in scope, focusing largely on its namesake test.

ACT or SAT: Choosing Which Test to Take

Students hoping to find the easier testing option are out of luck.

"These are high-stakes tests; neither of them is going to be easy," says Mai Jumamil, former director of college prep programs at Kaplan, a New York-based education company.

Korfmacher seconds that opinion: "I can definitely say, with certainty, that there's not an easier test."

To help students make their decision, experts suggest they begin with a [practice test](#) and see which exam is best suited for them.

"Your actual ability, how well you do [percentile](#)-wise on these tests, is really hard to determine unless you sit down and take a full-length official practice test from both the SAT and ACT," says Chris Lele, senior GRE/SAT curriculum manager for Magoosh, a California-based test prep company. "I think in general it makes sense to put

all of your time and resources into the test that you're going to do better on percentile-wise. I think the complication is when you do around the same."

The two exams may appeal to [different types of students](#), says Jumamil. A key difference is that students with a strong English background "may flourish on the ACT," which puts more emphasis on verbal skills, she says, while for students who are strong in math, "the SAT may reflect that much better."

Elizabeth Levine, an independent educational consultant and founder of Signature College Counseling in New York, advises students to take both college admissions tests. Ideally, she says, they take both tests by the fall of their junior year and then prepare at length to [retake](#) their preferred exam.

Deciding to Take or Skip the ACT Writing Test

The College Board announced in early 2021 that it was ending the SAT optional essay and subject tests. Currently, the ACT continues to offer its optional 40-minute writing test that accompanies the exam.

Experts have different views on whether a student should take the [optional writing portion](#).

"We're actually advising our students not to do the (optional) writing section," Korfmacher says, explaining that many colleges no longer require or recommend it.

But Levine encourages her students to take it: "The last thing you want to do is not take the optional writing section and find out that the school you're applying to requires or recommends it."

To Lele, it depends. "Unless you really struggle with writing, it's probably a good idea to take the essay so that can be an extra data point that colleges have to assess you by," he says.

Recent data shows that the majority of students complete the optional essay for each exam. More than 1.2 million test-takers from the class of 2020 opted for the SAT essay the last year it was given before discontinuation, according to College Board data. For the ACT, 678,906 students from the class of 2020 took the writing test. Compared with the class of 2019, fewer test-takers from the class of 2020 took the optional writing portions for either exam.

SAT vs. ACT Score Conversion

For students interested in comparing scores on the SAT and ACT, the [College Board](#) and the [ACT](#) organization provide conversion charts to show how composite scores stack up. The table below offers a breakdown of this data. According to figures from both organizations, the average SAT test score for 2020 high school graduates was 1051, and the average ACT score was 20.6.

<u>SAT SCORE</u>	<u>ACT EQUIVALENT</u>	<u>SAT SCORE</u>	<u>ACT EQUIVALENT</u>
1600-1570	36	1120-1100	22
1560-1530	35	1090-1060	21
1520-1490	34	1050-1030	20
1480-1450	33	1020-990	19
1440-1420	32	980-960	18
1410-1390	31	950-920	17
1380-1360	30	910-880	16
1350-1330	29	870-830	15
1320-1300	28	820-780	14
1290-1260	27	770-730	13
1250-1230	26	720-690	12
1220-1200	25	680-650	11
1190-1160	24	640-620	10
1150-1130	23	610-590	9

ACT vs. SAT Timing

The [SAT takes three hours](#) and the ACT lasts two hours and 55 minutes, though the ACT's 40-minute optional writing test would stretch it to a little more than three and a half hours.

The SAT features 154 questions vs. 215 for the ACT. Broken down by test components, the SAT has a reading test that takes 65 minutes, a 35-minute writing and language test and an 80-minute math section. The ACT is comprised of a 35-minute reading test, 45-minute English test, 60-minute math section and 35-minute science test.

The SAT does not include an independent science section but incorporates science questions throughout the exam.

The scoring for each test also differs. For the SAT, total scores range from 400-1600; for the ACT, the composite score runs from 1-36. Those ranges do not include the optional ACT writing test, which is scored separately.

ACT and SAT Costs

The costs of the exams also vary. The SAT costs \$52. The ACT costs \$55 for only the exam and \$70 if the optional writing test is included.

Additional fees may apply for other options, such as late registration. Students may also be able to [take the SAT or ACT for free](#) thanks to state support or fee waivers.

How to Be Successful on the ACT or SAT

Regardless of which test students decide to take, the goal is the same: earning a score that shows college readiness.

To help students be successful, experts offer strategic [test-prep tips](#). Some are simple, such as bring a snack on test day and take breaks when offered. Others require much more time and deliberation on the part of the student, such as identifying and working on weak spots in testing.

One best practice recommended by experts is to study well ahead of the test date.

"You really need to give yourself enough time to work out the areas you struggle in," Lele says.

Source: <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/act-vs-sat-how-to-decide-which-test-to-take>

2025-2026 Common Application Essay Prompts

Below is the full set of essay prompts for 2025-2026. You can start working on your essay at any time.

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
2. The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?
3. Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?
4. Reflect on something that someone has done for you that has made you happy or thankful in a surprising way. How has this gratitude affected or motivated you?
5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.
6. Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?
7. Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.

Check out this [video](#) (scroll to bottom of the page) from Common App for approaching your Common App Essay.

The Optional “Challenges and Circumstances” Question

Sometimes a student's application and achievements may be impacted by challenges or other circumstances. This could involve:

- Access to a safe and quiet study space
- Access to reliable technology and internet
- Community disruption (violence, protests, teacher strikes, etc.)
- Discrimination
- Family disruptions (divorce, incarceration, job loss, health, loss of a family member, addiction, etc.)
- Family or other obligations (care-taking, financial support, etc.)
- Housing instability, displacement, or homelessness
- Military deployment or activation
- Natural disasters
- Physical health and mental well-being
- War, genocide, or other hardships

If you're comfortable sharing, this information can help colleges better understand the context of your application. Colleges may use this information to provide you and your fellow students with support and resources.

Would you like to share any details about challenges or other circumstances you've experienced? **Yes or No**
If yes, please describe the challenges or circumstances and how they have impacted you.

****IMPORTANT****- DO NOT start your supplemental questions until after Common App's August 1 [account rollover](#) in case colleges choose to change their supplemental questions!!

The Common App Essay: What This Expert Wants You to Know

Writing the common app essays can feel daunting so here's one of our favorite comforting pieces of advice about getting started from the writer Anne Lamott:

Thirty years ago, my older brother, who was ten years old at the time, was trying to get a report on birds written that he'd had three months to write and it was due the next day. We were out at our family cabin in Bolinas, and he was at the kitchen table close to tears, surrounded by binder paper and pencils and unopened books on birds, immobilized by the hugeness of the task ahead. Then my father sat down beside him, put his arm around my brother's shoulder, and said, **'Bird by bird, buddy. Just take it bird by bird.'**

Essay by essay, that's how you do it.

Read on as former high school college advisor Alice Kleeman breaks down the just-released Common App prompts in what one college expert calls a *"master class."* And, as a bonus, she looks back at some of her favorite essay topics from over twenty years of advising students.

The seven prompts that will appear on the Common Application should work for nearly any topic you choose. Below, each prompt is broken down into possible academic, extracurricular, and personal topics that might fit neatly into a response. Of course, these are just suggestions, designed to jump-start your thinking, provide a gentle nudge if you feel stumped, and help you decide which prompt might provide the best opportunity for you to show the admission office who you are. Your response to any college-essay prompt should be entirely personal and one that only you could write. ***These examples are just to get your essay juices flowing!***

Common App Essay Prompts With Suggested Tips to Help You Start

1. Essay Prompt One:

Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.

Key words:

"background," "identity," "interest," "talent," "incomplete without"

Possible topics:

ACADEMIC:

- Have you moved from one school to another to pursue greater academic opportunities?
- Has your pursuit of academics been influenced by your parents' lack of formal education? Or perhaps the reverse: has your family's path through higher education influenced your own?
- Has your dedication to a particular academic area been shaped by your life experiences (for example, has your interest in medicine stemmed from growing up with a sibling with a chronic illness)?

EXTRACURRICULAR:

- Is your identity entirely tied up in the music you've been composing and playing since you were five?
- Has your ethnic background led you to participate deeply and fully in the dance, spiritual, or culinary traditions of your culture?
- Do you spend free time participating in activities through a cultural organization related to your family background?

PERSONAL:

- Do you come from a bi-cultural family? How would the person you are today be different if you did not have those influences?

2. Essay Prompt Two:

The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?

Key words:

“lessons,” “obstacles,” “later success,” “challenge,” “setback,” “failure,” “affect you,” “learn”

If you choose this prompt, after describing the “challenge, setback, or failure,” be sure to focus on the positive changes that emerged from the situation!

Possible topics:

ACADEMIC:

- Did you challenge yourself in an academic area that is not usually your forte, and find that it didn’t go the way you hoped it might?
- Did you seek a summer internship in an academic area you thought you’d like to explore more deeply, and find that you weren’t engaged in the way you wished?
- Have you submitted your writing, art, or lab results to a professional journal for publication, and received your first rejection letter? Or have you received what seemed to be negative feedback from a teacher and had to approach the subject in a new way?

EXTRACURRICULAR:

- Did you believe that the serious injury you experienced in your sophomore year would derail your athletic career? Or did you fail to make the team in your sport of choice? (Beware of common athletic clichés [“There is no ‘I’ in team,” “I learned that winning isn’t everything,” etc.])
- Did you decide to try participating in an extracurricular activity, only to discover your family obligations kept you from being a full participant?
- Did it seem like a great idea for you to follow in the footsteps of an older sibling and participate in his or her activities of choice, but you found it didn’t work out so well for you?

PERSONAL:

- Did you challenge yourself to a resolution, goal, or personal promise, and find you weren’t able to stick with it?
- Did you make an effort to reach out to people you hoped would become your friends, only to find they didn’t welcome you?
- Have you ever taken a close look at your character traits and personal qualities and hoped to make fundamental changes, but then realized those traits and qualities were inextricably tied to who you are?

3. Essay Prompt Three:

Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?

Key words:

“challenged,” “belief or idea,” “prompted thinking,” “outcome”

Possible topics:

ACADEMIC:

- Did you decide to offer a different-from-the-accepted and possibly unpopular perspective in your English or history class?
- Was there a school rule or policy relating to your academic path through high school that you challenged because you believed it did not serve you or others well?
- Have you pursued an academic interest that is not often followed by people of your gender or background?

EXTRACURRICULAR:

- When you learned that certain students were being bullied or excluded from an activity at your school, did you tackle the inequity?
- Were you ever told by a coach or activity director that you would not be successful in a particular activity, yet you chose to pursue it?
- Have your parents felt you couldn’t handle a new passion on top of your other commitments, leading you to seek ways to manage your time so you could prove your ability to balance your busy schedule?

PERSONAL:

- Have you begun to question the precepts of your religious or cultural upbringing?
- Are you resisting the pressure in your community to do it all—and do it all perfectly—and instead are seeking balance in your life?
- Have you ever made a well-thought-out effort to convince your parents to give you more independence and freedom?

4. Essay Prompt Four:

Describe a problem you've solved or a problem you'd like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma—anything that is of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution.

Key words:

“problem ... solved,” “problem ... you'd like to solve,” “intellectual,” “research,” “ethical dilemma,” “of personal importance,” “no matter the scale,” “steps you took ... or could be taken,” “solution”

Possible topics:

ACADEMIC:

- Did you ever leave a classroom entirely intrigued by a question posed by your teacher—and didn't stop until you'd mined the internet and the library to come up with answers?
- Have you ever created a technological or communication solution to a common problem? Or do you have career goals that would lead you toward solving a world problem through technology or communication?
- Have you had a job or internship in which you worked alongside others to solve challenging intellectual, scientific, or creative problems? Did working as a team make a difference in your problem-solving abilities?

EXTRACURRICULAR:

- Have you ever taken the initiative within one of your clubs, sports, or activities to create change and make the organization more equitable or accessible for others?
- In your pursuit of your extracurricular passion, have you encountered financial obstacles to participation, and have you found creative ways to solve them?
- Do your future goals include encouraging others to participate in an activity that has been a passion for you? How would you make that happen?

PERSONAL:

- Have you ever initiated a change within your own family? For example, if there's an issue that's always a source of conflict, did you decide to tackle it?
- Are there stereotypes of teens in your neighborhood? Have you made an effort to change them?
- Is there a challenge in your life—perhaps a physical or learning disability or an illness—for which you hope to advance a cure in your career?

5. Essay Prompt Five:

Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.

Key words:

“accomplishment/event/realization,” “sparked,” “personal growth,” “understanding,” “yourself or others”

Possible topics:

ACADEMIC:

- Did you make your government and economics education come alive by registering to vote on your 18th birthday? Did that milestone connect your academic education with your day-to-day life?
- Have you taken a class on a college campus and lived the life of a college student during that time? Or did you participate in an internship during which you worked as an equal with a group of adults and so matured yourself?
- Did you become a U.S. citizen and experience studying for and taking the test, and then participate in the ceremony that goes along with that milestone? Did your growth through that experience change you as a member of your community?

EXTRACURRICULAR:

- Has your talent allowed you to participate at such a high level that your teammates, band-mates, or co-workers are all adults, and they treat you as such?
- Has one of your activities taken you out of your own community, so you learned to travel and cope with new situations on your own?
- Did you come up with the funding for your most meaningful activity on your own, so you've assumed a heightened level of responsibility and appreciated the activity all the more for your assertiveness in making it happen?

PERSONAL:

- Does your family rely on you for responsibilities such as childcare for siblings, translation, transportation, or housework? Have your responsibilities led to a heightened understanding of the adults in your life?
- Have you taken on financial responsibilities to help support your family?
- Did you experience a religious or cultural rite of passage that led to your personal growth?

6. Essay Prompt Six:

Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?

Key words:

"topic/idea/concept," "engaging," "captivate," "learn more"

Possible topics:

If you choose this prompt, know that it lends itself best to an academic (intellectual) response.

ACADEMIC:

- When you finished a lab in your science class, did you find that you couldn't wait to replicate the lab at home, then seek more in-depth information about the principles of the lab, then create another lab to extend your learning?
- Have you used internet resources to teach yourself about an academic subject that is not offered as a class at your school? Have you become so absorbed in its study that you have introduced yourself to people whose career involves that subject?
- Have you felt a special spark when you've discovered interdisciplinary connections between readings, assignments, lectures, or other learning in classes that, in theory, are not closely related? How have you pursued those links?

EXTRACURRICULAR:

- Are you an activist, dedicated to an issue that calls your name, no matter what else you happen to be doing, to the point that you simply must spend time and energy every day devoted to that cause?
- Have you taken your participation on a team, in a club, or in an activity to the next step, seeking outlets beyond those provided so you can continue to indulge your passion and reach higher levels of skill and commitment?
- Have you developed your own unique time-management strategies that allow you to balance your normal family and school responsibilities with an enormous time and energy commitment to something that is deeply meaningful to you?

PERSONAL:

- Have you used the internet to teach yourself about a personal interest or passion? Do you spend hours every day following links that deepen your knowledge and understanding? Have you added to this concept/topic by creating your own content?

- Do you believe in creating your own personal history, spending hours divulging your deepest thoughts in your journal or sketchbook and losing yourself in your own thoughts and dreams?
- Is there a certain genre of reading that grabs you? Do you lose yourself for hours in biographies? poetry? historical novels? memoirs? What do you glean from your reading?

7. Essay Prompt Seven:

Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.

Key words:

“your choice”

Here's a great way to think about this open-prompt option: Read your entire application, then ask yourself, “Is there something important about ME the reader will not know from my application?” Your essay can address that omission!

With all the freedom this prompt offers, you'll still want to be sure that your essay, no matter what its topic:

- leaves the reader with a much clearer understanding of who you are
- focuses on something that matters—remember, this is an important opportunity for you!
- keeps in mind that you do not know who is at the other end reading your essay, so considers the possible reactions of an unknown audience
- follows general advice about college essays (gimmicks are generally not helpful, nor is trying to be funny if that's not who you are)

SOME OF MY FAVORITE COLLEGE ESSAYS

As I noted earlier, your response to any college-essay prompt should be entirely personal. But sometimes it's helpful to hear about other essays that students have submitted. Do remember, though, that the most important thing about the essay is that it should be something only you could write! Here are some examples and snippets from the most memorable essays I have read in over twenty years as a college advisor. You'll see that they paint a vivid and personal picture of the writer.

My all-time favorite college essay was a student's account of his work at the local hardware store, and what it meant to him to take care of people's basic home-and-garden needs. It was simple and straightforward; I knew him well by the time I finished reading the essay.

A similar topic, another student's after-school job, began, “Working in a library today is not for the faint of heart.” Really? I can't wait to know why! An essay that began with “I am amazed by what I have learned about myself from children” was a superb and telling little gem about an unexpected experience with young children already feeling academic pressure. Another great essay began with, “It is strange to be grateful for a fractured skull.” Don't you want to read on?

Another student wrote about her love of ... triangles! Yet another focused on the student's life-long love of reading. A lover of art history who volunteered at the Rodin Sculpture Garden began her essay, “If I'm not at school or at home, I'm likely to be found working behind the Gates of Hell.” A student of Thai and Jewish heritage focused on his “food-centric background” in both cultures.

And finally, who could resist an essay (about a student's family forays into intellectual curiosity and experimentation) that began, “The baking sheet slides into the oven, pushed by my mother's careful hands—and on it rest a dozen wadded-up balls of Kleenex, half fresh, half used.” The essays from which all of the above points are excerpted could fit neatly into one or another of the Common App prompts!

Source: <https://grownandflown.com/common-app-essay-expert/>

Admissions Officers Share Essay Writing Tips for Your Students

Last fall, during the National Association of College Admission Annual Meeting in Salt Lake City, Duke University Dean of Admissions Christoph Guttentag told me he would like students to answer questions, rather than write beautiful prose in a college admissions essay. He and I had been chatting about all the misinformation on the Internet, inside the schools and elsewhere about the essay when he shared this insight.

After I told him I was a journalist before starting this company, he shared that he has an ongoing disagreement with his wife (also a journalist) about the college essay. She thinks college admissions essays should resemble gorgeous prose; Guttentag just wants the students to write the essays themselves – and show some reflection.

“Students are often so focused on writing beautiful pieces of prose that they fail to answer the question and do not write authentic, meaningful personal statements,” he said. “The hook gets in the way; the writing gets in the way.”

I like to talk to college admissions officers like Guttentag to get insight into the essay and its role inside the complex and competitive admissions field. Over the years, I have discovered that whether they work at large, small, public, private or Ivy schools, admissions representatives want the same thing, no matter how they use them. They want reflective stories written by the student, in the voice of a 17-year-old student.

You already know that colleges use essays to find out if a student is compatible with the educational environment on their campus. But it goes deeper than that. They want to know how a student thinks, what they’ve learned, how they’ve grown. Will they add value to the campus? Will they fit in? The essay provides admissions with additional insight to help them make admissions decisions.

Your job is to let your students know they should write college essays that colleges will want to read to help them make an impression on their reader.

Here are some more tips direct from college admissions offices throughout the U.S.

HEATH EINSTEIN, DEAN OF ADMISSION, TEXAS CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

“Don’t get hung up on the right topic. Most 17-year-olds haven’t scaled Kilimanjaro, so don’t worry about finding an angle that hasn’t been tried before. Write about what you know. If the most meaningful experience to you has been serving as a camp counselor, it doesn’t matter that other students have addressed it. People will try to talk you out of certain ideas, but trust your gut. Ultimately, be yourself, and that will be good enough.”

TAMARA SILER, SENIOR ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF ADMISSION & COORDINATOR OF MINORITY RECRUITMENT, RICE UNIVERSITY

“Sometimes an essay can be the conduit for a student to reveal something to the admission committee that we would never have thought to ask. In terms of selective admission, personal statements are very important in adding needed texture to an application file. Quantitative factors such as transcripts and test scores only tell part of the story; a personal statement can provide context and truly show why a certain student is a better match than other clearly capable applicants.”

CHANDRA MITCHELL, INTERIM DIRECTOR OF FRESHMAN AND INTERNATIONAL ADMISSIONS, UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

“Admissions is competitive. Having a strong essay that stands out is important. Tell a story from your life, and demonstrate your character. It is your story, and we want you to speak in your own voice. Make it unique to you. If you want to impress us with content, you don’t have to use big words.”

SHAWN FELTON, DIRECTOR OF UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSIONS, CORNELL UNIVERSITY

“What are we looking for? We are creating a class. We look at numbers, grades and test scores. But there’s more to it. We are trying to put a face with all of this information.”

GREGORY SNEED, VICE PRESIDENT FOR ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT, DENISON UNIVERSITY

“Even after reviewing a mediocre transcript or seeing a limited activities list, I can be swayed to admit a student who writes an essay who really blows me away. The topic of the essay doesn’t need to be mind-blowing (in fact, the most mundane topics are often the most relatable and enjoyable), but if it reveals someone who would be highly valued in our campus community, that could tip the scales.”

LEONARD SATTERWHITE, SENIOR ASSOCIATE DEAN OF ADMISSIONS, WASHINGTON & LEE UNIVERSITY

“How authentic is the voice in the writing? What issues does the student tackle in the essay? Is the writing memorable, and does it illuminate vividly the student’s personality, perspective and/ or background? Does the writing reveal deep intellect and the potential to be an academic leader at W&L?”

JAN DEIKE, VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF ADMISSIONS

“Sometimes students feel that because they haven’t found the cure for cancer, they have nothing to share. Life is truly lived in the smaller moments, and that can be a powerful essay.”

ROBERT SPRINGALL, VICE PRESIDENT FOR ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT, MUHLENBERG UNIVERSITY

“At Muhlenberg, we use the essay to get a better sense of the person behind the application. For strong students, it helps us gauge potential fit with one of our honors programs and eligibility for scholarships. For candidates in the middle of the applicant pool, the essay can help us form better impressions of an applicant’s potential to excel at Muhlenberg.”

KIM BRYANT, UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF ADMISSIONS

“This is your interview. Let me know who you really are.”

Source: <https://www.linkforcounselors.com/admissions-officers-share-essay-writing-tips-for-your-students/>

Why Visit Colleges?

A key part of deciding which college to go to is finding a good fit. And a great way to get more information is to visit the colleges in person.

Of course, visiting colleges may not be possible for everyone, but it's a good idea to make the trips, if you can. It can help you determine whether a college is the right place for you.

Get a Firsthand View

A campus visit is your opportunity to get a firsthand view of a college. A college catalog, brochure or website can only show you so much. To really get a feel for the college, you need to walk around the quad, sit in on a class and visit the dorms.

Get Answers to Your Questions

A visit also gives you the chance to talk to students, faculty, and financial aid and admission officers. You can get answers to important questions, including:

- What is the average class size and the student-to-faculty ratio? Are most classes taught by professors or by teaching assistants?
- What is the campus meal plan like? How is the food? What are the options?
- What is the makeup of the current freshman class? Is the campus fairly diverse?
- What's the social scene like? What kinds of activities are available?
- Is there plenty of dorm space or is there a housing crunch?
- How many students are commuters and how many are campus residents?

Use this [checklist for campus visits](#) to remind yourself of everything you want to do once you get to campus.

Your family members can also participate in the visit and any information sessions. They can help you think through your decision about which colleges to apply to, and ultimately, which college to attend.

Get Valuable Information

Pick up any official college material you see, such as brochures and financial aid forms. Don't forget to get business cards, too, so you'll have a real, live contact if you have a question about admission or financial aid.

Student newspapers and activity calendars give you a sense of what campus life is really like. Check out bulletin boards to see what bands are coming to the campus, what parties are advertised, what internships are posted and generally what the day-to-day energy of the place is.

Get Ready to Decide

Ultimately, it's your decision. Listen to your gut. Do you feel comfortable walking around campus? Do you feel at home? Do you click with the students and faculty? Is this what you imagined college to be like? Spending time on a campus helps you determine whether a college is a good fit.

Source: <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/find-colleges/campus-visit-guide/why-visit-colleges>

Campus Visit Checklist

How to Make the Most of Your Trip

Visiting a college campus helps you get a sense of what a college — and life at that college — is like. This can help you decide whether the college is right for you.

When planning your campus visits, make sure to allow time to explore each college. While you're there, talk to as many people as possible. These can include college admission staff, professors and students. Below are some other things you can do while visiting. Note that some activities, such as meeting with an admission officer or staying overnight in a dorm, might need to be set up in advance.

Gather Information

Find out what you need to do to apply and see if the college's class and major offerings are what you want:

- Take part in a group information session at the admission office.
- Interview with an admission officer.
- Pick up financial aid forms.
- Sit in on a class that interests you. If classes aren't in session, just see what the classrooms are like.
- Meet a professor who teaches a subject that interests you.
- Talk to students about what they think of their classes and professors.
- Get the names of the people you meet and their business cards so you can contact them later if you have questions.

Explore the Campus

Get a feel for student life and see if this college is a place where you will do well:

- Take a campus tour.
- Talk to current students about life on campus and the college.
- Check out the freshmen dorms and stay overnight with a student, if possible.
- Visit the dining hall, fitness center, library, career center, bookstore and other campus facilities.
- Talk to the coaches of sports that you may want to play.
- Walk or drive around the community surrounding the campus.

Check Out Campus Media

Tune in to learn what's happening on campus and what's on students' minds:

- Listen to the college radio station.
- Read the student newspaper.
- Read other student publications, such as department newsletters, alternative newspapers and literary reviews.
- Scan bulletin boards to see what daily student life is like.
- Go to the career center and learn what services it offers.
- Browse the school's website and any campus blogs.

Questions to Ask During Your Visit

Here are some questions you may want to ask your tour guide or students you meet on campus:

- What are the best reasons to go to this college?
- What's it like to go from high school to college?
- What do you do in your free time? On the weekends?
- What do you love about this college?
- What do you wish you could change about this college?
- Why did you choose this college?
- What is it like to live here?

[Download/Print the checklist](#)

Source: <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/find-colleges/campus-visit-guide/campus-visit-checklist>

How to Make the Most of Virtual College Tours

Virtual college tours can be a useful tool for weighing options or previewing a campus.

By Cole Claybourn Oct. 4, 2022, at 3:05 p.m.

Virtual campus tours, which many schools implemented initially as a way to keep up with the technological times, proved a necessity once the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the normal flow of the college-seeking process.

Now, college admissions and marketing professionals say virtual campus tours are a vital component of the college search. Using 360-degree video and virtual reality, colleges are able to welcome students to campus from hundreds or even thousands of miles away.

"I think virtual tours can be a great pre-screen or preview for students who have maybe never seen campus," says Kristi Lafree, director of enrollment marketing at Butler University in Indiana, which offers a 360-degree video tour alongside supplemental videos. "They maybe want to get a gut check. They want to make sure that if they do come visit that it will be worth it."

Hundreds of U.S. colleges now provide prospective students with web-based virtual tours, complete with interactive photos and videos designed to be compatible across all devices. Some schools are even using virtual reality, though VR headsets are required for those experiences.

University officials say they hope virtual tours give students a sense of what college life at the school looks like, from the architecture to the activities. Students can dive into exploring buildings and parts of the campus that might not be covered as deeply on a standard in-person campus tour, says Joffery Gaymon, vice president for enrollment management at Auburn University in Alabama, which has a 360-degree virtual tour on its website as well as a video of a student-led tour.

Through a virtual tour, students can hop from the business building to the student union, or from athletic facilities to residence halls. A general in-person tour might not include a visit to the student newspaper building, but an aspiring journalism major may be able to tour it online.

Virtual tours have become a critical tool for attracting international students who might not be able to visit the campus in person, Gaymon says. Auburn has about 2,500 international students, visiting scholars and employees from 100 different countries each year, according to the school.

"It's a way for them to dive a little deeper and to have a greater sense of familiarity with the university while they're exploring options," she says.

The University of California—Berkeley also offers 360-degree virtual tours for prospective students. Previously, the school was posting YouTube videos and virtual question-and-answer sessions, but it has since moved to a platform called YouVisit, which is used by about 700 schools across the country. Virtual tours proved to be a game changer for admissions, says La Dawn Duvall, executive director of visitor and parent services at Berkeley.

Students visiting Berkeley can start in the center of campus with a virtual tour guide providing information about the school while they explore at their own pace. In the last year, Duvall says more than 22,000 unique visitors have taken a general virtual tour of the school with about 3,000 more touring specific locations around campus that are available on YouVisit, including residence halls and academic buildings.

Auburn averages nearly 30,000 virtual visitors, including students living in India, China, Canada and Brazil, and about 25,000 in-person visitors per school year, Gaymon says.

These numbers suggest how important virtual tours have become for schools across the board, Duvall says. In a matter of minutes, students and families can visit a school in California, then zip to one on the East Coast, saving hours in the car or thousands in airfare and hotel bills, which may allow families to plan other visits.

Lafree says she expects these trends to continue, even as in-person visits resume.

“The demand for that virtual admission visit has really hardly decreased at all, so there’s no going back to pre-COVID for college admissions,” she says.

Well-produced virtual college tours also offer pizzazz that experts say prospective students may not see in other marketing materials. For schools that use VR, it provides an immersive experience; users have the sense that they’re in that environment.

Prospective college athletes don’t have to visit an actual campus to get a good idea of what the school and its athletic facilities look like, says Zvi Goffer, a co-founder of CampusVR, the platform a number of universities and college athletic departments use for VR tours. This has been especially beneficial for schools and athletes as National Collegiate Athletic Conference transfers have become more prevalent, since it allows athletes to take an unofficial visit of a school without having to leave their living room, he says.

“This is going to become the norm,” Goffer says. “Visualization, as much as some people want to fight that trend, there’s just no substitute for it.”

But universities are also aware that prospective students are craving authenticity, even through virtual experiences and in social media, says Alexa Heinrich, social media manager for St. Petersburg College in Florida.

Lafree says high school students are cognizant that virtual tours and other school-produced content are intended to be marketing tools, so they’re also looking at a school’s TikTok, Instagram and YouTube pages to find first-person, user-generated content from other students.

Many students have begun to use social media apps the same way they might use a search engine, Heinrich says, and experts say visiting social media channels is a good way for students to make the most of vetting a school virtually. With this in mind, Heinrich says some schools have started to do “student takeovers” on their social media pages, where students show what a typical day is like on campus for an average student.

Potential students are craving something “that feels a little less robotic,” she says.

“Social media plays a huge part in showing what student life and campus life is going to be like for them,” Heinrich says. “We can put out emails and tell you about the affordability of our college, but social media is going to do its best work when we’re showing students enjoying their experience at our college.”

Prospective students are applying to more schools, according to a March 2022 Common Application report, which showed the number of submitted applications rose by 21.3% between 2019-2020 and 2021-2022. (That includes data from 853 member schools.) With shortlists now longer than ever, students can use virtual tours to weigh options.

Campus officials advise prospective students to use the virtual tour as a jumping-off point and then to weigh academic programs, admissions requirements and other factors that will shape student experiences at the school. If students have interest in a specific program or activity, they should follow up directly with the school to gather more information.

“I would recommend taking their time and not just using just the tour, but using the larger campus website, the websites of your department or academic area of interest – supplementing those together,” Duvall says. “Take information from all of those places, because there’s not one that’s going to give you everything you need to represent the experience.”

While college officials praise virtual tours as an option, they also encourage students to visit campus if possible. Gaymon says the function of a virtual college tour is to get a look at campus life. Other questions are best reserved for the admissions office.

“The virtual tour does not replace the traditional visit,” she says. “For us, it truly enhances it.”

Source:

<https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/how-to-make-the-most-of-virtual-college-tours>

The next section of this booklet is about Financial Aid. Masterman holds Financial Aid Night each Fall when the FAFSA is available to complete. We will review financial aid information in detail in the fall. The next FAFSA is scheduled to be released in October 2025. The CSS Profile will be available on October 1, 2025.

Financial Aid

ALL STUDENTS should complete the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#) to get federal aid for college. The FAFSA is generally released in October of your senior year. Generally students should finish their college applications first, and then the FAFSA. See [this link](#) for information about filling out the FAFSA form.

After completing the FAFSA, go to the [Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency \(PHEAA\) website](#) to apply for the Pennsylvania State Grant.

Certain colleges also require the [CSS Profile](#), another financial aid form that's used to apply for institutional financial aid. This is money from individual colleges, not federal funding. (See page 42 of this booklet.)

WHAT is federal student aid?

Federal student aid comes from the federal government—specifically, the U.S. Department of Education. It's money that helps a student pay for higher education expenses (i.e., college, career school, or graduate school expenses).

Federal student aid covers such expenses as tuition and fees, room and board, books and supplies, and transportation. There are three main categories of federal student aid: grants, work-study funds, and loans. Check with your school's financial aid office to find out which programs the school participates in.

WHO gets federal student aid?

Some of the most basic eligibility requirements for students are that you must

- demonstrate financial need (for most programs—to learn more about financial need, visit [StudentAid.gov/how-calculated](#));
- be a U.S. citizen or an eligible noncitizen;
- have a valid Social Security number;
- be registered with Selective Service, if you're a male (you must register between the ages of 18 and 25);
- be enrolled or accepted for enrollment in an eligible degree or certificate program;
- be enrolled at least half-time (for most programs);
- maintain satisfactory academic progress in college, career school, or graduate school; and
- show you're qualified to obtain a college or career school education by
 - having a high school diploma or a state-recognized equivalent (for example, the General Educational Development [GED] certificate);
 - completing a high school education in a home-school setting approved under state law; or
 - enrolling in an eligible career pathways program.

See the full list of eligibility requirements at [StudentAid.gov/eligibility](#).

Types of Aid

Need help paying for college or career school? Federal Student Aid, an office of the U.S. Department of Education, may be able to help you get the financial aid you need for college. We provide more than \$111 billion in federal student aid each year to help pay for college or career school.

Federal Student Aid offers three types of financial aid.

1. **Grants**: Financial aid that generally doesn't have to be repaid.
2. **Loans**: Borrowed money for college or career school; your loans must be repaid with interest.

3. Work-Study: A federal work program through which undergraduates and graduate students at participating schools earn money to help pay for school.

Read more about types of aid on the [FAFSA website](#).

ARE YOU LOOKING FOR MORE SOURCES OF FREE MONEY?

Try [here](#) for tips on where to look and for a link to a free online scholarship search.

Financial Aid 101

Few students can afford to pay for college on their own. Financial aid is intended to make college affordable for everyone.

- **Financial aid can be merit-based or need-based.** Merit-based aid is awarded in recognition of a student's academic achievement, talents, or special skills. Need-based aid is awarded based on a family's ability to pay for college. The majority of aid provided by colleges and universities is need-based.
- **There are many sources of financial aid.** Financial aid is provided to students by the federal government, the state in which the student lives, the college to be attended by the student, and other public and private institutions.
- **Some forms of financial aid must be repaid while others do not have an obligation of repayment.** Your financial aid 'package' may include a combination of both types of aid.

Estimate your Federal Student Aid

The federal government provides a tool — the [Federal Student Aid Estimator](#) — which you or your parents/guardians can use at any time to estimate your eligibility for federal financial aid. Thinking about how you will pay for college as early as possible will help you plan and find your fit.

Source: Step Up To College Guide

2025-26 CSS Profile Student Guide

This guide provides the basic information you need to complete your [CSS Profile](#) application at cssprofile.org starting Oct. 1 of each year.

WHAT is the CSS Profile?

The **CSS Profile** is an online application used by colleges and scholarship programs to award Institutional (their own) aid. (For **federal** aid you must complete the **FAFSA**, available Oct. 1 at fafsa.ed.gov.)

WHEN do I complete the CSS Profile? Most students complete the application in their senior year of high school. Schools may have different deadlines - be sure to check with each school you are applying to.

WHO must complete the CSS Profile? Check your colleges' information to determine whether they require the CSS Profile. A [list of participating colleges](#) is also found on the CSS Profile Homepage. Some schools may also require divorced or separated parents to complete separate applications.

HOW do I complete the CSS Profile? You submit the CSS Profile at cssprofile.org. Once you sign in, you will find a list of useful documents, such as your federal tax returns and other financial information that you'll need to have on hand to complete the application. Help is provided within the application and additional help is available in English and Spanish by chat, phone, or email by clicking "Contact Us" in the application.

WHAT does the CSS Profile Cost?

The CSS Profile is free for domestic undergraduate students whose family income is up to \$100,000. The fee for the initial application is **\$25**. Additional reports are **\$16**. Payment may be made via credit or debit card.

The Process

- 1. Sign-in** – If you created a College Board account for the SAT, PSAT or AP, use the same username and password to sign-in. If not, create a new account.
- 2. Complete the Application** – The application provides online help to guide you. You do not need to complete the application all at once; you can save your application and return to it later.
- 3. Submit the Application** – The submit date and time is based on Eastern Time.
- 4. Review Your Dashboard** – Your dashboard will include your payment receipt and any next steps, such as uploading documents through the Institutional Documentation Service (IDOC). You may also add additional schools at any time by clicking on "Add a College or Program."
- 5. Made a mistake?** – If you made a mistake on your application or need to include additional information after you submitted, you can update your application once by clicking "Correct Your CSS Profile" on your Dashboard.

Questions? Customer Service Representatives are available via email, online chat, and phone. Visit collegeboard.org/contact-us#css for more details.

Six Ways to Fight Application Stress

Got a case of application stress? Feel pressured to ace tests, write brilliant essays, and create perfect apps? Worried about getting in? Here's help.

Every year, high school seniors run the gauntlet of applying to college—and survive. But when you're in the middle of it, it is tough to gain perspective. Rest assured that many, many students have been in your predicament. Those students, and the counselors that help them, have passed along the following tips to help keep your fears at bay.

How to Reduce Your Get-Into-College Anxiety

The natural reaction to stress is to flee what's causing it. But the solution is to accept that things are tough, take time to calm down, and then take steps to stay on task. Knowing you have got it all covered is the best remedy for application anxiety. Here are some strategies.

- 1. Breathe.** Seriously, simply sitting still and breathing deeply helps panic subside.
- 2. Organize your apps.** Many students report this is the best way to stop worrying about your applications. Make a list of all deadlines and requirements, and then a timeline for getting it all done.
- 3. Reduce essay stress by telling your story—and starting early.** Not knowing what to write in your essays is a huge panic trigger. Look at the essay prompts and take lots of time to think about how your personal experiences might relate to them. Your essay might practically write itself.
- 4. Apply to a college you like that will probably admit you.** This way, you'll know you have a college to attend. To further reduce stress, apply early if the college offers **early action** decisions.
- 5. Apply to at least one college that is test-optional** if you are concerned about your test scores. **Test-optional** means the college will not consider your scores in their decision.
- 6. Ask an adult to proof and review your applications** so you are confident there are no mistakes or omissions.

How to Weather the Tension While Waiting for Decisions

- **Dive into your senior year.** Enjoy the "rites of passage" for seniors. Spend time with your close friends—you may not see much of them once you are off to college. Same goes for your parents. And of course, keep up your grades.
- **Get excited about your upcoming college life,** regardless of where you get in. Talk to college students about what college is like. Dream a little about what you would like to put in your dorm room.
- **Find out more about the colleges lower down on your list.** Rejections are a natural outcome of applying, and getting excited about options besides your top choices will ease your anxiety about those potential denials.

Source: CollegeData.com

Stress Management During College Application Season

by [Rebecca Barer](#) CollegeXpress Student Writer

Don't procrastinate: This advice is perfect, but you actually have to follow it. Unfortunately, most of us prefer to put everything off as long as possible. While this might be semi-manageable in high school, it's really hard to start writing your college essays on New Year's Eve and hope for the best.

If you have trouble prioritizing, you need to get organized. Use any sort of tool to plan your daily life. Experiment and find what works for you. There are plenty of apps, calendars, and planners you can use. Maybe you need to keep a running to-do list or plaster everything with sticky notes—find something helpful and stick to it.

I personally love having a small planner that I keep with me throughout the day to manage my school work, appointments, and overarching goals. Writing down deadlines can keep them at the front of your mind. Whenever you get home from school or work, pull out your planner and see everything that you need to get done. This is a great way to manage regular school work in addition to the time you need to devote to college applications and scholarships.

Do your research: Don't be the person who misses deadlines because they didn't take the initiative to do some simple research. A lot of our stress comes from the uncertain. Get rid of your "what if," "how do I," and "when should I" questions through good old research.

Start planning for college with timelines, videos, and articles on [Khan Academy](#), or schedule an appointment with your [guidance counselor](#). If you already know what colleges you're applying to, make sure to look at their websites to find their specific deadlines. Once you know all the information about applying to your colleges, you can devise a plan for how to best manage your time to finish your applications well before the deadlines.

If you have no clue where to start and need all-around tips and timelines, check out the College Board's [Get It Together for College](#)—a planner and college advice book with checklists and helpful hints for everything you need to get yourself ready for college. Just remember, advice books and planners only reduce stress if you actually use them!

Plan ahead: Thinking about things in a broad scope can keep you from last-minute panic and long-term stress. Take a look at what kinds of programs you're interested in starting sophomore and junior year. This can help you plan on what classes to take, determine if you need to take the SAT or ACT, and manage how much time you'll have for extracurriculars and scholarship applications.

The last thing you want is to find out a school you want to apply to Early Decision requires the SAT with Essay and the deadline is in November, but the next SAT is offered in December. This is pertinent to vacation time as well. It's really great to take college tours during winter or spring break of junior year to figure out where you want to apply, but the tours may be all booked if you don't plan ahead.

Also, when you're applying to colleges, try and get most of your essays done the summer before your senior year. This gives you time to revise them, focus on applying for scholarships, and manage your school life without the added stress of more essays.

Be realistic: If you have your heart set on going to MIT to study Theoretical Physics but you're barely passing Physics now, maybe it's time to reassess your goals. Forcing yourself into something that isn't right for you can cause a lot of unnecessary stress. Sit yourself down and ask what you *really* want out of life.

This is especially true with trying to boost your résumé with extracurriculars. Colleges would much rather see you pick two activities that show your loyalty and passion than be a member of 10 clubs and spread yourself so thin that your grades suffer. Taking on too much can cause a lot of stress. Those four clubs you're running sophomore and junior year are going to be a lot more work senior year during college application season.

This also pertains to the number of schools you're applying to—don't try to apply to a million schools. Counselors and PrepScholar.com agree you should apply to six to eight schools, with a range of **back-up, level, and reach schools**. Up to 15 schools is okay—just make sure you'll be happy at each school if you decide to enroll, you have the time to apply, and you realize applying to all those colleges costs a chunk of money. Applications can add up, and you don't want to waste your money on a school where you know you won't be happy.

Don't forget to relax: It doesn't matter how great your time management skills are—if you never take time specifically for yourself, your stress will make you miserable. Set aside 20 minutes a day to relax or do something you enjoy. This could be working out, cooking, meditating, reading, taking a bath or shower, playing or listening to music, making artwork, journaling, watching TV, or playing video games.

Try to write a bullet journal to get organized, take a nap, or do a fun DIY project if you're not sure where to start. Life is meant to be lived. If you spend all your time preparing for college and none on yourself, your happiness is going to go down and your stress level is going to go way up.

Stay positive: Thinking about your future should be fun! You're applying to colleges because that's the path you think will bring you the most happiness, so why not have some fun along the way? If you catch yourself thinking negative thoughts, just stop for a minute and take some deep breaths. Spend time with people who make you happy and help you stay positive. Put sticky notes with motivational quotes on objects you use a lot. Find a motivational quote-of-the-day calendar (or maybe just one with cute puppies!) to help increase your positivity.

Also make sure to maintain a healthy diet (although one Oreo never killed anyone...), drink plenty of water, and get enough sleep. A lack of these things might make you start to feel physically sick, which is not good for your stress levels.

Remember, everything has a way of working out. Even if life throws you a curve ball, a positive mood can help you get through it!

Source:

<https://www.collegexpress.com/articles-and-advice/admission/blog/stress-management-during-college-application-season/>

School Counselor Information for College Applications

Title: School Counselor

School Address: J.R. Masterman Laboratory and Demonstration School
1699 Spring Garden Street
Philadelphia, PA 19130

School Website: <https://masterman.philasd.org/>

School Phone: 215-400-7580

School Fax: 215-400-7581

CEEB Code: 393356

Counselor Contact information:

Ms. Addy Nelson
aclaudionelson@philasd.org
(215) 400-7580 x2, x2
juniors with last names starting with A-Ga

Mr. James Allen
jameallen@philasd.org
(215) 400-7580 x2, x3
juniors with last names starting with Go-M

Ms. Heather Marcus
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juniors with last names starting with N-Z