



# Tips for the college admissions process

## Tips for Involved Parents and Students

*Postsecondary planning is a big job. You have a lot to research and think about and many decisions to make. Maybe you've watched an older sibling or friend go through the process, so you know it can be pretty stressful. So, do yourself some favors:*

**Start early, follow a timeline, and meet deadlines.** While you may want to start researching your postsecondary plans when you start high school, the real work kicks in junior year and hits high gear your senior year. Don't put off until the last minute what you can do ahead though. Maintain a college planning calendar and keep an eye on deadlines for admissions and financial aid. Ask for recommendation letters well in advance of deadlines. Find a planning calendar in *The Choice Book* or talk to your counselor.

**Get (and stay) organized.** Are catalogs, brochures, and other correspondence from colleges taking over your bedroom? Create a filing system to help you keep on top of the information you'll accumulate during the admissions process. Clearly label a file folder for each school that really grabs your interest. (You may want to color code folders and calendar entries.)

**Evaluate prospective schools.** Consider the factors that are most important to you— factors like reputation, cost, location, programs— and evaluate each of the schools. Compare your rankings between schools. You might consider giving an evaluation sheet to your parents to get their feedback on your top schools, then compare notes.

**Try not to get overwhelmed.** Narrow your choices to a reasonable number of schools for the application process. That may be three, five, or nine

schools. It's up to you. Counselors often recommend that students consider one or more "dream" schools that would be an academic stretch, but also "reach" schools where a student probably would be admitted, and "safety" schools where the student is sure to be admitted. Remember, there are costs associated with applications so that may limit you as well.

**Choose your college destination for the right reasons.** Just because it's a good fit for your best friend, girlfriend/boyfriend, older sibling, or your parents, it may not be the best fit for you. And if the school doesn't have your major or a good academic reputation, having a great football program shouldn't be the deciding factor. Think before you matriculate.

**Keep everything in perspective.** Yes, it's a big decision, but not a permanent one. Even if you don't get into your dream school, you may be able to transfer later. Do your best work wherever you attend college and you'll be a more attractive transfer candidate. (Or, you may find out that the school you attended is a great fit after all!)

**Make sure you keep family members in the loop.** As you narrow the field, let them help you assess which schools are right for you. Ask them about how you and your family will handle college finances and how that will affect your choices. Ask them to go on college tours with you, but take your own notes. Compare notes later. And ask them for advice. Yes, you'll have to live with whatever decision you make but it makes sense to let the folks who know you best to be part of the decisionmaking process.

Sources:  
[CollegeAnswer.com](http://CollegeAnswer.com).  
[EducationPlanner.org](http://EducationPlanner.org)

