



Dear Class of 2011 and Parents,

As you move along in your college search, you will be provided with many opportunities to learn about yourself and to develop skills to communicate that learning through essays and interviews. It is important, therefore, that you proceed thoughtfully and carefully. Do not rush your search; have some fun with it. Indeed, the more you understand about yourself and the college selection process, the better your ability to make sound educational decisions which will lead to the college that best fits you. No college, no matter how big its name or how storied its history, will work for you unless its offerings, academic and social, match your needs and interests.

In an effort to make students and their parents feel more comfortable with the work that lies ahead, the College Counseling Office has prepared this guide to map out the college application process step by step. We will use this guide and a series of informational letters to keep you abreast of the latest admissions news. We hope that seniors and their parents will carefully read all information in order to become familiar with the full cycle of the college journey. Later, when you are in the process of choosing among and applying to colleges, you can refer back to specific sections.

This guide hopefully will take some of the worry and mystery out of the college admissions process and help you begin your quest for a college that will be a wonderful match. Remember that applying to colleges need not be an overwhelming process. Plan your efforts wisely, work steadily, keep your mind open and energies high, and good things will come to pass.

Finally, although it is your involvement in the college selection process that really matters, for it is your future after all, always remember that you are not alone. We wish you good luck and look forward to working with each of you.

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Department Philosophy

The college process is an educational one and the culmination of both formal and informal learning up to and throughout high school. While advancing the principles of the Academy Mission, we endeavor to help each child continue the development of the skills necessary for a successful post-secondary experience and life-long learning. With the student at the center of the process, we work with the families as allies and advocates to help students realize their individual best. Though each child comes to the moment differently, we offer all our students our trust to make good choices, our respect through candid discussions, our support for their honest effort, and our appropriate help at any time.

Disciplinary Record

In accordance with the policy in the LFA student handbook as well as the policy outlined in the National Association of College Admission Counselors Principles of Good Practices, the College Counseling Office maintains the following when reporting to colleges:

To the extent allowable under FERPA, it is Lake Forest Academy's policy to provide to school officials with legitimate education interests (including colleges to which a student is applying) accurate information about a student's academic, extracurricular, and character record, as well as a description of those personal qualities that are requested in and relevant to the admissions process. Further, counselors and students may be asked on application forms whether an applicant has been suspended or expelled or faced severe disciplinary action; when asked, counselors will acknowledge the violation, and students will be told to do the same. Should there be any significant change in a student's record after applications have been filed, counselors will report those changes to colleges.

If you are asked on an application whether you have been suspended, expelled, arrested, or faced severe disciplinary action while in high school, you must answer truthfully and completely. You should write an explanation of the incident and your reaction to it and its consequences. It should be direct and to the point. Your counselor must review this before you submit it to colleges because, usually, they will be asked to address the issue as well. If you are suspended or expelled after completing applications, then you must notify the colleges that previously asked for that information on their application. If you are not sure how to proceed, ask your counselor.

Colleges understand that high school students make mistakes. They are most concerned about patterns of behavior, behaviors that endanger, and violations of honor. Most (major) disciplinary action are not a factor in an admissions decision, but failure to report one could certainly jeopardize a student's chance of admission.

Advice for Students

As you embark on your college journey, please keep the following ideas always near at hand:

"...You are who you are, and you are not greater if you get into your first-choice school or less if you do not. You will make the best of you life's opportunities and your own gifts if you believe in yourself. If you do not have confidence in yourself and respect yourself, you will be defeated by disappointment."

"...Go to the school that most clearly resembles the sort of school you want. Withhold judgment until you are admitted, and then take seriously the schools that want you. I have spent my entire career in Ivy League universities. Believe me, they have no monopoly on great scholarship, far from it. They offer a good education. So do a great many other colleges and universities. This is a simple fact. Please accept it from me. If you are not admitted to the school you really thought you wanted, but you are admitted to one lower down on your list, go to that school with respect for the school and regard for yourself."

"...Greatness comes from within. Achievement is what you do, not what other people say. Lives of worth and service take shape in every kind of circumstance. We are what we do, and not what people say about us. If you are disappointed, pick up your life and go on. You are better for it. So too will be the many people to whose disappointment you can relate because of your own, the many whose lives will be better and richer because of you."

Jacob Neusner

How to Grade Professors and Other Unexpected Advice
Boston: Beacon Press, 1984

Tips for Parents

Helping Your Child Through College Admissions

Information provided by the National Association for College Admission Counseling

The college search and admission process is a life-changing event for your child, and often for the whole family. The beginning of the college search signals the beginning of a child's transition from teenager to young adult. As a result, it can be difficult for parents to strike the right balance of helping their child without taking over. Here are some dos and don'ts for parents entering the world of college admissions.

DO learn about the process.

Even if you have vivid memories of your own college decisions, realize that the college admission process has changed since you attended. Whether or not you attended college, invest some time in reading up about today's college admission. There are many good books on this topic in your public library or bookstore, and high schools often sponsor workshops for parents on college admission topics. Or ask your child's counselor to recommend helpful resources.

DO discuss restrictions up front.

If there are financial or geographic restrictions that limit the range of colleges your child can consider, discuss them with your child at the beginning of the college search. Then your child won't waste time and energy researching colleges that she won't be able to attend.

DON'T limit choices based on fees.

It's always a good idea to encourage your child to include several affordable colleges among his or her college choices. But remember that financial aid often helps families send their children to even the most expensive colleges. No matter your income level, find out all you can about financial aid. Your child's guidance counselor or colleges' financial aid offices can direct you to good resources and answer your questions about how financial aid works.

DO remind your child of deadlines.

The life of a high school student is often very busy, and teenagers are still learning time management skills. So help your child begin keeping a calendar or day planner to keep track of all those deadlines.

DON'T nag.

Remember, the goal is for your child to own the process so he or she can make college decisions that are right for him or her.

DO listen and offer advice.

For many students their choice of college is their first adult decision—and it can be difficult. Likewise, it can be difficult for parents to find the right balance of guiding their child without making decisions for him or her. Try to act as a sounding board for your child: ask good questions and let your child supply the answer.

DON'T make decisions for your child.

Your child needs to choose a college based on his or her individual abilities, interests, and personality. To that end, beware of pressuring your child to apply to the college(s) you would like him or her to attend. Encourage your child to apply to a good range of schools, but your child must decide which colleges to apply to and which college to attend. After all, your child will be the one who spends several years living and learning at college.

DO be your child's cheerleader.

The college admission process can be stressful. Your child may feel uncertain about the decisions he or she must make, fearful of rejection from colleges, or anxious about meeting deadlines for both college applications and schoolwork. Over the course of the search process, your child may change his or her mind about career aspirations, academic goals, or what he/she wants in a college. All of this is normal. Parents can help their college-bound child by offering plenty of encouragement, a listening ear, and gentle guidance. And don't forget to celebrate each step along your child's way from high school to college.

The Adventure Begins

Mail call again! Do you seem to have more and more mail coming from colleges every day? Do your classmates seem to be talking more and more about test scores and yield data? Do your grandparents keep calling and asking you where you are planning to attend college? Guess what? You can't put it off any longer—the college search is upon you.

Does this idea make you feel nervous and intimidated? It is certainly natural. However, with a few strategies to start you off in the right direction, you'll be on your way in no time.

The best place to start is YOU. Ask yourself questions like, "What do I like to do?" "What do I hate to do?" "What am I good at?" Jot down your interest and abilities. Think about what kind of environment works best for you. Are you looking for a larger institution than your high school? Are you looking for a college close to home or far from home?

Write a short paragraph with this question in mind: What is your ideal college? Picture it. Now write it down and try to be quite detailed.

Now start looking through those college viewbooks. Acquire three boxes and label them Yes, No, and Maybe. Go through the mail and sort.

Once you have some idea of what you are looking for, use all of your resources: Internet, guidebooks, and college counselor.

With help from your college counselor, a list of colleges will soon be a reality. They will range from the "reach" schools for you to the "fairly sure" schools.

In the coming months you and your family will become experts on many of the colleges and universities throughout the nation. Use the information wisely and be true to yourself. Find the college that is right for you.

Have fun with this journey!

The Excitement of a College Fair

College fairs are exciting for anyone, whether you are just beginning your college search or have already made your college list and are checking it twice. The college fair offers you and your family an opportunity to talk to the admission representative, pick up college and university literature, and ask those burning questions.

Make sure that you make the most of the college fair without getting caught up in the crowds and confusion.

Before you head to the fair, jot down a short list of questions to ask the admission representatives. Don't forget, many of these representatives will be reviewing your applications, so introduce yourself to them to make the connection. Don't be intimidated; they want to get to know you and answer your questions.

Once you arrive at the fair, you will be given the listing of colleges and universities that are present. Scan the list to determine which colleges you want to visit. Planning ahead allows you to stop at the colleges that most interest you.

Your questions should be unique to your interests and not easily found in standard college materials (such as "How many people go to your school?"). Instead, ask about courses you would take your freshman year. Other subjects include extracurricular activities, financial aid, study-abroad programs, and internships.

Reminder: Visit schools that you may not know about. You may find that a school that you have never heard of offers you the exact criteria you are looking for, plus a couple of other things. Think outside the box. Also, don't forget to fill out information cards in order to be on the institutions' mailing lists.

You may wish to jot down in a notebook your first impressions of the colleges that you visited at the fair.

By the time the fair is over, you may find yourself carrying a great deal of literature. When you get home with your pile, don't just put it in a corner and forget about it. There was some reason why you picked up the literature, so explore! There is some risk of information overload, however, so give yourself a day or two and then go back to your information.

College Reps at LFA

As well as representatives visiting LFA during College Night, we have many visitors during the fall term. This allows our students to meet with admission representatives first-hand and hear about any news at the institution, in addition to information about the curriculum, student housing, and campus facilities. All visits will be posted in the college counseling office and on the college counseling website.

College Checklist

This checklist will help you compare and contrast your list of colleges and universities.

Type of College	Size	Setting	Academic Environment
Church Affiliated	Up to 1,000	Urban	Majors of Interest
Public	1,000 - 5,000	Rural	Research opportunities
Private	5,000 - 15,000	Climate	Study abroad
Coed	Over 15,000	_____ Miles from home	# of faculty with PhD's
Single Sex			%of male/female faculty
			Career advising programs
			% of graduates who go to graduate/professional schools
			Graduate assistants as teachers
			Faculty-student ratio

Student Body	Student Life	Housing
Male/Female ratio	School spirit	Housing options
% living on campus	Ethnic/cultural groups	Single rooms available
Geographic diversity	Activities of interest	Only doubles/suites
% students of color	Fraternities/Sororities	Dining options
% international student	Recreational facilities	Guaranteed housing - 4 years
% students receiving financial aid		

Admission Requirements	Admission Selectivity	Tuition (Year)
Fee \$	Fairly sure	Up to \$15,000
Specific HS courses	Possible	Up to \$25,000
Tests	Reach	Over \$25,000
Essay	Most Selective	
Interview		
Portfolio		

College Visits: A Planning Checklist

Visiting college campuses is important to help you determine what type of school you are looking for (i.e.: big school, small school, urban, or small town). Visiting can also occur at two other points in the process: when a student is trying to decide which school to apply to or when a student has been accepted to the institution. The visit is essentially to observe the school in motion and to determine how you fit there. Keep in mind this question: "Can I see myself here?"

Before you hop in the car, you will want to research the school as much as possible so that when you arrive, you can ask the questions that can't be answered by a viewbook. In addition, you need to call the institution to schedule your visit. As soon as you know the date you would like to visit, phone the college and let them know you are coming. In turn, the college will send you a confirmation letter with directions, a campus map, and maybe even area hotels and local attractions.

Depending on the size of the institution, your day might consist of the following:

Information session: An admission representative will present a general overview of the college or university to a large group and take questions.

Tour: Again, depending on the size of the school and what time of year you visit, you may have a tour that includes five families or a single family. The guide may be either an admission representative or alumni, but usually will be a current student.

Individual interview: An admission representative will meet with you. Some schools interview the student first and follow up with parents. Other schools meet with the entire family at once. Off-campus interviews are usually conducted by an alumnus/ae of the school.

Other formal things you can do on campus:

Sit in on a class.

Talk to a professor.

Meet with the coach of a particular sport.

Meet with a band or choral director.

Stay overnight on campus.

Informal things you can do on campus:

TALK to current students! (Why did you decide to come to this college? What do you do on weekends? What is unique about your school? Are professors available for help? What are the negatives about this college?)

Eat at the cafeteria.

Read the student newspaper to see what is happening on campus and get a feel for school spirit.

Attend an athletic event.

Visit the library.

Read the bulletin boards.

Drive around the surrounding community.

Campus Visit Questions

Academic Courses

How much flexibility will I have in my curriculum? Can I change majors? Can I double major? Can I add a minor? Can I cross-register with other colleges? Is there a "core curriculum"?

Is there a first-year experience or seminar program?

What is the average class size? What is the average class size freshman year?

What is the faculty/student ratio?

How many majors are offered? Does your school offer a major in _____?

Can I get an internship in my major field? Is it a graduation requirement?

Can I study abroad? Where?

How many credits/courses do students usually take each semester?

How often does each class meet per week?

Faculty

What percentage of the faculty teaches freshmen and sophomores? Are they full professors? Will I be taught by graduate students?

How accessible is the faculty? Do they have office hours? Do they serve as advisers?

Does the faculty have contact with the professional world?

Does the school emphasis research or teaching for faculty?

Student Life

Is the student body diverse? Are they all from the local area? Are they tolerant of different kinds of students?

What student organizations are on campus? Is it easy to start new clubs?

Are there fraternities and sororities?

What athletic teams are there? Intramural leagues? Is there school spirit?

Is there an effective student government?

What happens on campus on weekends? Is it a suitcase school? Are events planned in the local community?

Admission and Financial Aid

Are you part of Common Application? Do you require an extra supplement?

Should I send in all of my test scores? Do you calculate a super score? Is there a preference between SAT or ACT? Are you test optional? If so, do you have additional requirements in place of test scores?

How much does your school cost? Does this include board, room, and expenses?

How do I apply for financial aid? Does your school offer athletic, scholastic, merit, or performance scholarships?

Facilities

How are the facilities in the various departments, particularly in _____ department? What about the athletic, music, and theater facilities...(and so on)?

Is housing guaranteed for four years? What would be the best dormitory for a freshman? Can I change dormitories?

How is the food?

Miscellaneous

Do you feel safe on campus? In the surrounding area?

How active are alumni? What do they do after graduation? What percentage goes on to graduate school?

What are the service learning opportunities?

What support services are available?

Do I need a computer/printer? Are there computer labs on campus, and how many?

Can I get a job on campus?

Can I have a car on campus? Is there parking available?

Tips for a Better College Visit

Make an appointment well in advance of your planned visit to ensure that the admissions personnel are prepared for your arrival.

Don't try to do too much—if you try to see more than one or two colleges per day, you may not get an accurate perception of those institutions.

Be prepared and research each college prior to your visit.

Be yourself and dress comfortably and neatly. Be friendly and participate.

Be on time and if you are going to be late, notify the Admissions Office.

Make notes and take some campus pictures in order to keep track of the colleges that you visit.

Meet people and ask to speak to professors and current students.

Observe everything—maintenance, functionality, comfort.

While visiting, keep in mind that you are interviewing the college as much as it's interviewing you.

Be sure to ask for the business card of the admissions counselor you met with for future correspondence. You will also want to send a thank-you note.

Have fun and enjoy your time on campus.

The Interview

Preparation

When a college representative calls you, whether it is an admissions officer or an alumni representative, write down his/her name, number, and all information about the proposed interview. Note any information that he/she offers about him/herself. You will want to follow up with a thank-you note, so pay attention to any clues as to how you can do this successfully.

Do your homework

That is, read everything about the college/university before you get to the interview. Underline things that intrigue you, programs in which you are interested, and write questions that occur to you in the margins as you read so you remember them. Download school newspapers from the web, or, if you have time, ask the admissions office if they can send you a packet.

Write out a list of questions

Since you have read all of their materials, you know the campus as they want you to. You need to think about what else you want to know...what are they not telling you that is important to you? How can you ask about it diplomatically? Also, reading their information saves you from embarrassing yourself with stupid questions. (Yes, there are some stupid questions...in this case, stupid questions are those that you can get answered by reading the materials.) Use what you have read to help compose your questions and to answer those of the interviewer. Make a longer list than necessary—you don't want to run out of things to say or ask.

Consider the questions you might be asked, and think about ways to answer them using what you know about yourself and the college. Practice answers so they are easy on your tongue and are offered without uncertainty or over-confidence.

Interviews typically move from questions about:

INDIVIDUAL → INDIVIDUAL IN THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY → INDIVIDUAL IN A WORLD CONTEXT

So, know yourself and your strengths and interests, know yourself as a community member, and know yourself as a world citizen. Read The New York Times for several days before the interview if you don't do that as a matter of course. Be ready to make use of those things you know about the college in talking about yourself—that is, be ready to frame yourself as a student at that college, thriving and contributing because of a particular program or activity or course of study.

Think about how you want the interview to go. Run through it in your head as if in rehearsal. Picture yourself at your best—calm, comfortable, fluent, engaging, smiling—the picture of someone enjoying themselves.

Interviewing Tips

Be on time and neatly dressed. Remember the interviewer's name, introduce yourself, and be unfailingly polite and appreciative of this opportunity.

Remember: the best interview isn't a tennis game in which you successfully hit back every trick shot the interviewer poses. Try to think of it instead as an opportunity for conversation with someone who has something to offer you and vice versa. Someone once told me to think of it as a "date" with the end goal—a second date. The best thing you can hope for is that they will say, "Wow, I could talk to that person all day."

Consider: people love to talk about themselves. Hence, any time you can redirect the interview so the interviewer is the one talking, he/she will enjoy him/herself. Be interested in what they have to say and use it to help you frame your questions.

Maintain good eye contact.

Listen to what the interviewer is telling you for clues. Whenever possible, use what they are saying to help show them you are hearing them and interested in what they have to say. Use this information later when/if you get time to ask your questions.

Do not be afraid to say, "I don't know" when you don't know. Hopefully, you'll be prepared enough so you won't have to say it a lot, but consider it an opportunity to make them the expert. Turn it around, as in, "You know, that's something I was wondering as well and wanted to ask about. Maybe you could..." Or, if the question is about you, you can be ambivalent—"I'm struggling with that myself...most people seem to consider me a math person, but I really enjoy my English classes. Is _____ College a place where I can...?"

Do not be afraid to be passionate about something, but don't ramble endlessly about that passion.

Interview Dos and Don'ts

DO

Understand the purpose of the interview—informational, evaluative, or a combination
 Prepare for the interview by finding out about the college or university
 Practice interviewing with a college counselor, parents, sibling, or friend
 Maintain eye contact
 Show interest, even if it is your “safety” school
 Engage the interviewer. It should be a conversation, not just a question and answer session
 Be yourself
 Dress appropriately. Lake Forest Academy dress code is perfect (although boys may forgo a tie)
 Send a prompt thank-you note to your interviewer

DON'T

Compare colleges or ask the interviewer to do so
 Whine about the hardships of traveling so far, finding parking, how early it is, etc.
 Use valuable interview time to review information available in writing
 Miss an interview without calling (some schools keep records)
 Be late

SOME QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT BE ASKED

Why are you interested in our college?
 What is your best academic subject?
 What is your worst academic subject?
 Do you have a major in mind? If so, why did you choose that major?
 How would your friends describe you?
 What books have you read lately?
 What movies have you seen lately?
 Do you think that your high school education has been relevant to today's world?
 Describe an issue in your community that needs immediate attention. What would you recommend to improve the situation?
 If you could interview anyone, living or dead, who would it be and what would you ask first?

SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR YOU TO ASK

What do you value most about _____ College?
 If you were an incoming freshman here, what would you be sure to take advantage of? Why? Where would you want to live? What course of study would you pursue? What would you be sure not to miss...etc.?
 What aspect of the campus/program do you think students miss? What is its best-kept secret?
 Where did you go to college? What does _____ offer that your college didn't?

The Application: General Information

The Secondary School CEEB Code is 142525.

Request application material from colleges early and, ideally, no later than October. Make a copy of each application to use as a rough draft. Do not write on the original until you are absolutely sure what you want to say.

Approach applications individually, one at a time.

- Consider creating color-coded files, one for each college, to organize your materials. Many students have found this method invaluable in the past.
- File a copy of every document you mail to the colleges. Materials do, on occasion, fall into postal or institutional black holes. If you send an application electronically, print out the receipt acknowledging that the transmission was completed successfully.
- If you are sending a Common Application:
- Keep the original; send only Xerox copies
- Type or use black ink
- Add a supplementary note to each individual institution
- Complete and return promptly any supplementary forms sent by a college
- Fill out information on the Secondary School Report form BEFORE giving it to the College Counseling Office.
- On both teacher recommendation forms and on Secondary School Report forms, you will see a section stating your rights under the Buckley Amendment. Under the Buckley Amendment, you have the right to review your educational record if you enroll at a given university. You also have the option to waive your right of access to specific recommendations. Consider waiving your right to access. It tells your recommenders that you trust them to write a positive recommendation and leaves no suspicion that you are trying to prevent the recommender from writing negative statements about you. Remember that when you sign, you are only waiving the right of access to specific recommendations; you retain access to the rest of your file.
- When listing activities on your application, be sure to arrange them in decreasing order of importance, if permitted. Traditionally, student government, sports, drama, school publications, and community service have been considered principal activities. However, importance is by no means confined to these areas. In general, colleges are looking for leadership, commitment, and longevity (For what length of time and with what intensity have you been pursuing this activity?), talent, accomplishment (What fruits have been born of your efforts and talents?), or maturity. A job or a significant responsibility at home would qualify as an important activity; so, too, would any recognized work in the arts.
- It may be helpful to include tapes, portfolios, or written work when applying to certain schools or programs. Consult with your college counselor if you have questions.
- Plan campus visits and interviews well in advance. If you are going to miss class days, complete the Absence to Visit College Request Form one week prior to your departure.

Generally, think of filing no more than nine to twelve applications: three to four "reach" schools; three to four possible or "solid shot" schools; and two probable or "back up" schools. If you have no "reaches" on your list, you are not giving colleges the chance to recognize your distinctions. If you have too many "reaches" on your list, you run the risk of taking on more applications than you have time to do well, and of having limited choices in the spring if your applications to "reach" schools have substituted for applications to "solid shots."

Please do not hesitate to stop by the College Counseling Office if you have any questions—general or specific—about the admission process. NO QUESTION IS INSIGNIFICANT. Your part of the application is the one representation of you generated directly by you; do the very best job possible.

EARLY APPLICATIONS

Early Decision (E.D.) is used by some Ivies and many small, selective colleges. An acceptance is binding and requires that you withdraw all other applications. Deadlines are usually in early November and notification (either on admission, deferment until spring consideration, or denial) arrives four to six weeks after the deadline. Some colleges also have two E.D. rounds. The second-round deadlines are usually in December or January with notification in February. The same rules apply as above.

Early Action (E.A.) is used by other schools. Deadlines and notification dates are similar to Early Decision, but the acceptance is NON-BINDING. Please note there are some schools that have a single choice Early Action Policy which prohibits a student from applying to other E.A. colleges.

The risk of both Early Decision and Early Action is that you can be denied admission on the basis of your performance through your junior year or deferred into the regular pool. Therefore, if your record needs to be strengthened by senior grades or your testing is in need of improvement, it would not be prudent to apply early.

The Elusive Essay

The danger lies not in writing bad essays but in writing common essays—the one that admission officers are going to read dozens of. My advice? Ask your friends what they are writing and then do not write about that!

~Scott Anderson, director of College Guidance at St. George's Independent School (TN)

The essay is one of the most important parts of your application. If a college asks you to write an essay, its admissions office places value on how you express yourself. Your essay often serves to make the facts of your folder come alive. You are able to provide information that does not appear in grades, test scores, and other materials. The essay allows you to reveal your intelligence, talent, sense of humor, enthusiasm, maturity, creativity, sincerity, and writing ability.

Top Tips

- Start early and you'll have plenty of time to give it your best. Don't try to pull it off the night before the deadline. The admissions counselors will know it was a "night before" essay.
- Be yourself and think about what your interests are and what you enjoy talking about.
- Your essay should reflect not only your ability to think and write, but also your character, beliefs, and aspirations.
- Don't be intimidated by the essay questions. Make an outline of your essay before you get started if need be.
- Take a risk—don't settle for the topic that everyone else is going to write about. Remember your audience.
- Type your essay neatly! The admission counselors will thank you.
- Keep focus on your topic. Make sure that you answer the question.
- Be honest. Don't write what you think the committee wants to hear. They only want to learn more about you. They are not looking for something specific.
- You should know that the more selective the college, the more emphasis it places on the essay.
- Your essay should always lead from your strengths. An essay of excuses, for poor academic performances for example, rarely proves helpful to an admission committee. If you have particular and unusual circumstances which you would like to explain (i.e. family problems, past illness) you might consider covering these topics in an additional essay.
- If you choose to write about social and political causes, make certain that they are the ones in which you are personally involved. Writing simply about environmental issues tells virtually nothing about you.
- Make your essay come alive. Capture the reader's attention.
- Give special attention to creating a strong introduction, supporting arguments, and an appropriate conclusion. Be careful of the "cheese factor."
- Use words that are in YOUR vocabulary, NOT the vocabulary of a Nobel Peace Prize winner.
- Remember that English isn't just for English class. Apply the good writing skills that you have learned. Tie a literary reference or an object that you have read about into your essay. Integrating the personal statement with literature is an interesting way to write a college essay.
- Write and rewrite. Don't be satisfied with your first essay.
- Proofread, proofread, proofread! Don't leave it up to the spellchecker on your computer.
- Read your essay aloud. It may seem silly at the time but it will help you see how the essay flows.
- Get opinions, whether they be from your mom, dad, brother, sister, teacher, or your college counselor.
- Finally, remember that the essay must be YOUR work. While it is fine and even admirable for you to ask for reactions from others, it is unethical to have someone else write or rewrite your work.

The Personal Essay: What Can You Write About?

Steve George C 2000 Reproduced with permission

How has a particular place influenced you? Don't feel limited to places of grandeur such as foreign countries. A room full of people speaking a different language, a science lab, a photo darkroom, a video arcade, or a stage may say something about you. What? Do not just describe a place. Show how it relates to you.

Have you ever been affected by someone or some group very different from yourself? For example, have you had the experience of being a boy on a girl's athletic team or a healthy person in a home for the terminally ill? How did the experience influence you?

Have you ever been in a tense, demanding, grueling, exhilarating, or frightening situation? How did you handle it? What does your response imply about you?

Has a particular relative, employer, friend or neighbor influenced you? How? How are you different as a result?

Do you have a dream? For example, would you like to invent something as common as the toothpick, to have your artwork in a museum, or to do something that will benefit mankind? Can anything stop you from achieving your dream? What does your dream imply about you?

Have the words of someone famous or unknown influenced you? Use the words as a starting point and show how and why they have influenced you.

Write about an ironic turn of events which worked out in your favor. For example, perhaps you learned a great lesson from a terrible teacher, or you were assigned to review films for the school paper and you can't write well, you hate films, and you really wanted to take pictures. How did the experience affect you?

If you know what career you want to pursue, discuss an event or situation that influenced your decision. Begin by describing the situation rather than summarizing it.

Describe a typical day in your life but choose only those details that convey parts of your personality. Try writing it in the third person.

Have you ever witnessed a crime, an act of cruelty, or a charitable act? How did it influence you?

Make a list of all your activities, hobbies, grades, and dislikes. What are they? Discuss yourself in terms of these qualities, using only two or three items from your list. Choose items that are not included on your application.

If you immigrated to this country, what motivated the journey? Did the move have an impact on you? How?

Is there a philosophical, religious, psychological, or scientific question which bothers you? Does it seem to come up repeatedly in your personal experience? What is it and how is it evidenced in your daily experience? How does it shape your beliefs?

Do you have a pet peeve? A complaint? Something you would like to change? What is it? What does your concern with it imply about you?

Have you ever been involved in a really hilarious escapade? Can you write about it with freshness and retain the spontaneity of the experience, as well as its humor?

Scoring Guide for College Application Essay
Steve George C 2000
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9-8 The best essays reveal the writer's personality through carefully selected and evocative details. Original ideas or observations are thoroughly developed, and the question posed is responsibly addressed.

Writers of these essays demonstrate stylistic maturity by a mastery of sentence structure, diction, vocabulary, and organization. The writing need not be without flaws, but it reveals the writer's ability to choose from and control a wide range of the elements of effective writing.

6-7 These essays also impart a sense of the writer's personality, but they are less vivid, less focused, and more general than the best essays. Although using a fresh approach, the essays perhaps do not tackle a unique subject or address the topic thoroughly.

These essays are well-written in an appropriate style, but with less mastery than the top papers. Some lapses in diction or syntax may appear, but the writing demonstrates sufficient control over the elements of composition to present the writer's idea clearly.

4-5 These essays contain predictable approaches to commonplace subjects with a standard organizational plan. Observations and conclusions are less detailed, more superficial.

They are adequately written, but do not demonstrate control over a full range of the elements of composition. Organization is evident, but it may not be fully realized or particularly effective.

2-3 These essays are generally boring, unfocused, impersonal, and ill-conceived. No organizational plan is evident; little attention to the question posed is obvious.

These essays suggest little or no control over diction, syntax, vocabulary, or organization. They frequently contain serious lapses and inappropriate stylistic choices.

1 These essays are completely off the mark or seriously deficient in intelligible content, or they are so full of grammatical, punctuation, and spelling errors that the writer is obviously not bound for success in college.

Application Documents

Secondary School Report (SSR)

College applications contain a section (often call the Secondary School Report, or SSR) to be completed by the college counselor. Please submit all SSRs to the College Counseling Office three weeks before the college deadlines. Be sure to complete all requested student information on the top of the form. At the same time, you should complete a Transcript Request Form for every college to which you will be applying.

Stamps and envelopes are not necessary; the College Counseling Office will take responsibility for mailing your SSR, transcript, and school profile. For those schools that request that your part of the application be sent with the college counselor's part, submit your completed portion to the College Counseling Office and we will mail both parts together.

The SSR includes the following:

Transcript (including courses and grades); Please see note.

Transcripts from former schools if you did not enter LFA in ninth grade

The LFA School Profile

The college counselor's letter which will describe your contributions to the school community, special talents, academic achievements, prowess in athletics or extracurricular activities, and accomplishments. It will also explain weaknesses that are obvious elsewhere in the application, for example, low grades during one term or difficulty in a particular subject.

Test Scores.

Official Test Scores must be sent directly from Educational Testing Service (SAT) or American College Testing (ACT) to the colleges. It is the student's responsibility to contact these agencies. Test scores are NOT sent with the transcript.

Teacher Recommendations

Many colleges require a teacher recommendation, some require two, and some will request that an English teacher write on your behalf. It is very important that you choose teachers who know you best and who come from different disciplines. It can advance your case to have recommendations from subjects that require different types of thinking—English and math, or history and physics, for example. As a general rule, it is wise to pick teachers in whose classes you have done well.

If you have a special talent or stated academic area of interest, select teachers who can speak about your achievement in these fields. For example, if you have been very involved with drama at LFA, it may make sense to have Mr. Dreyfoos write in support of you. If you are applying to engineering schools, you will probably be required to have recommendations by teachers of math and physical science. If you are applying as a pre-med student, you ought to have a science teacher write a recommendation.

Protocol for Teacher Recommendations

A number of institutions, particularly large state universities, do not require individual teacher recommendations. Read the instructions for each application carefully.

- Do not confuse teacher recommendations with counselor recommendations or SSRs. Check the headings of each form.
- Ask a teacher personally if s/he will write a recommendation for you. NEVER leave a request in a mailbox or on a desk.
- If a teacher declines, do not feel rejected or slighted; s/he may simply not know you well enough to write a full and convincing letter.
- Give teachers a pre-addressed, stamped envelope and a return card for each college to which you have asked them to write.
- Be sure to give teachers the recommendation forms AT LEAST three weeks ahead of time, particularly during November. Do not expect faculty to spend vacation time writing

recommendations because you are disorganized. Teachers have every right to refuse your request if you do not give them adequate advance notice.

- Make sure you inform recommenders of all deadlines and of any special circumstances.
- As much as possible, give your recommenders your full list of colleges at the time of your request.

Use the college application checklist to keep track of whom you asked and when you asked them. Be thoughtful. As you receive news from the colleges, thank your recommenders. Good recommendations require considerable time and effort. Your teachers have a vested interest in your applications, too.

Supplementary Information

The NCAA

If you are planning to enroll in college as a freshman and you wish to participate in Division I or II intercollegiate athletics, your initial eligibility status normally must be determined by the NCAA Initial-Eligibility Clearinghouse.

Important points for LFA students:

The requirements for eligibility to participate at Division I differ from those required at Division II. Students normally should register after completion of their junior year in high school and only after an informed judgment has been made as to the prospect's potential at the Division I or II level.

For more complete information go to www.ncaa.com or www.ncaaclearinghouse.net.

Other points to remember:

NCAA academic committees are vested with the authority to grant waivers of the initial-eligibility requirements based on objective evidence that demonstrates circumstances in which a student's overall academic record warrants a waiver of the normal application of the legislation.

Initial-eligibility waivers must be filed by an NCAA institution on behalf of the student. (Note: students with NCAA-approved diagnosed disabilities may file a waiver on their own behalf.)

Correspondence and independent study courses may be used to meet the 13 core-course requirements provided the following conditions are met:

- The course meets all requirements for a core course as defined by the NCAA.
- The instructor and the student have access to one another during the duration of the course for purposes of teaching, evaluating, and providing assistance to the student.
- Evaluation of the student's work is conducted by the appropriate academic authorities in accordance with the high school's established academic policies.
- The course is acceptable for any student and is placed on the high school transcript.

Courses taken in the eighth grade may not be used to satisfy the core-curriculum requirements, regardless of the course content or level.

Students enrolling in a Division I institution generally may not use courses taken after high-school graduation to meet core-curriculum requirements.

Top Ten Test-Day Tips
Brought to you by the American Counselor Association

#1: Be Equipped.

On the night before the test, gather everything you'll need: the admission ticket, a valid form of photo identification, several #2 pencils, a calculator with fresh batteries (for the SAT only), a watch, and a high-energy snack.

#2: Don't Cram.

You've worked hard. The best thing to do the evening before the test is to get a good night's sleep. You've covered the content and you've perfected the skills. Now it's time to get in test mode—calm, rested, confident, and ready.

#3: Dress in Layers.

The climate in test centers can vary from sauna-like to frigid. Be prepared for both extremes and everything in between. You need to be comfortable to do your best.

#4: Arrive Early.

You may even want to scope out your test location before test day to ensure that you know where you are going. Getting to the test should be the least of your concerns.

#5: Don't Spend Too Much Time on One Question.

Each question is worth the same number of points. If a question is confusing or too time-consuming, don't lose your cool. Instead, move on to greener pastures. You can come back to hard questions if you have time at the end of a section.

#6: Don't Look for Unscored Questions/Sections.

The experimental section on the SAT is well camouflaged. Sometimes the ACT contains experimental questions that are scattered throughout the sections. Do your best on every question—that way, you're covered.

#7: Keep Track of Where You Are in a Section.

On the SAT, obvious choices early in a set may be correct. Obvious choices near the end of a set are often booby traps.

#8: Guess Aggressively.

If you don't know an answer, don't leave the question blank or guess randomly. Eliminate the choices you know are wrong and then make an educated guess from the remaining options. Remember, if you can eliminate even one answer choice then it pays to guess on the SAT.

#9: Be Careful Filling in the Answer Grid.

Make sure you are filling in answers next to the right numbers.

#10: Relax.

Your attitude and outlook are crucial to your test-day performance. Be confident.

Top Ten Tips for Winning Scholarship Applications

Ever wonder what the people who award the scholarships want to see? Fast Web has polled scholarship providers across the country asking for their tips on applying for scholarships.

#1: Apply only if you are eligible.

Read all the scholarship requirements and directions carefully and make sure that you are eligible before you send in your application. Your application won't make one bit of difference if you aren't qualified to apply.

#2: Complete the application in full.

Be sure to complete the entire application. If a question doesn't apply, note that on the application. Don't just leave it blank.

#3: Follow directions.

Provide everything that is required. Don't supply things that aren't requested; you could be disqualified.

#4: Neatness counts.

Make a couple of photocopies of all forms you receive. Use the copies as working drafts as you develop your application packet. Always type the application. If you must print, do so neatly.

#5: Make sure your essay makes an impression.

The key to writing a strong essay is to be personal and specific. Include concrete details to make your experience come alive: the who, what, where, and when of your topic. The simplest experience can be monumental if you present honestly how you were affected.

#6: Watch all deadlines.

To help keep yourself on track, impose a deadline for yourself that is at least two weeks prior to the stated deadline. Use this buffer time to proofread your application before you send it off. If worse comes to worst, call the scholarship provider in advance and ask if it's possible to receive an extension. Don't just send the material late. The committee may refuse late applications. Don't rely on extensions; very few scholarship providers allow them.

#7: Take steps to make sure your application gets where it needs to go.

Before sending the application, make a copy of the entire packet and keep it on file. If your application goes astray, you can always reproduce it quickly. Make sure your name (and social security number, if applicable) appears on all pages of the application. Pieces of your application may get lost unless they are clearly identified.

#8: Give it a final once-over.

Proofread the entire application carefully. Be on the lookout for spelling and grammatical errors. Ask a friend, teacher, or parent to proofread it as well.

#9: Ask for help if you need it.

If you have a problem with the application, do not hesitate to call the funding organization.

#10: Remember—your scholarship application represents you!

Your ability to submit a neat, timely, complete application reflects on you. It's your face to this organization. Take pride in yourself by submitting the best application you can.

Helpful College Related Web Links

College and University Information

Campustours.com: A site dedicated to virtual campus tours, interactive maps, college webcams, campus movies, and pictures.

Commonapp.org: Common application for 190+ selective, independent colleges and universities; test-prep links and programs; and financial aid information.

Ctclonline.com: Information on the Colleges that Change Lives.

Collegenet.com: College search, scholarship search, electronic application, links to the Web's best resources for financial aid, test preparation, college sports, and academics.

Collegeview.com: College search with profiles of 3,700+ college and universities, virtual tours, electronic applications, financial aid info, career planning, scholarship search.

Cic.edu: Official website of the Council of Independent Colleges.

Eiworldwide.com: In-depth info on worldwide post-secondary academic programs and careers associated with business, engineering, and computer science.

Hillel.org: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life provides opportunities for Jewish students to explore and celebrate their Jewish identity through its global network of over 500 regional centers, campus foundations, and Hillel student organizations.

Kaplan.com: College search, financial aid calculators and info, test prep, practice PSAT, SAT I/II, ACT and TOEFL test, free prep software, and career info.

Naia.org: Official site of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics. This site also has links to the 300 member schools and provides information on scholarships and grants.

Ncaa.org: Official site of the National Collegiate Athletic Association.

Petersons.com: College search, financial aid, online applications, test prep, study abroad programs, summer campus, graduate programs, job search.

Usnews.com: College rankings, scholarship search, Expected Family Contribution (EFC) calculator, financial aid info.

Financial Aid Information

Educatid.com: Educaid, a First Union company, provides financial information, from loans to saving for college, and tips for juniors and seniors. Educaid is one of the top ten education lenders.

Fafsa.ed.gov: If you are filling out the FAFSA for the first time, complete it on the Web! FAFSA on the Web is user-friendly, utilizing an interview-type format.

Fastweb.com: The internet's largest free scholarship search database program.

Finaid.org: Financial aid info and calculators; info about testing, college admissions, and career placement; links to free online scholarship search programs.

Firn.edu/doe/bin00072/home0072.htm: Scholarship information regarding Florida's Bright Future Scholarship Program.

Salliemae.com: Financial aid calculators and info, federal and private loan info, link to CASHE (College Aid Sources for Higher Education), scholarship search.

Testing Information

Act.org: Click on ACT Online Registration to register.

Collegeboard.com: To better serve students and their parents, College Board redesigned their Web site to provide fast, current, and reliable information to help students prepare for the transition to college. Students can create personalized college applications, identify sources of financial aid, and locate colleges that match their talents and preferences.

Collegeboard.com/sat/html: Click on SAT Online Registration to register.

Great Books for the College Search

For Students

100 Things Every College Student Should Know.

Been There, Should've Done That: 505 Tips for Making the Most of College. (Suzette Tyler, Front Porch Press, 1997)

Campus Daze: Easing the Transition from High School to College. (George Gibbs, Octameron Associates, 1998)

Campus Pursuit: How to Make the Most of the College Visit Interview. (G. Gary Ripple, Octameron Associates)

Chicken Soup for the College Soul.

College Match: A Blueprint for Choosing the Best School for You. (Steven Antonoff and Marie Friedman)

College 101: A First-Year Reader. (John D. Lawry, 1998)

College 101: The Book Your College Does Not Want You to Read. (Guy Stevens, 1998)

Colleges That Change Lives: 40 Schools You Should Know About Even If You're Not a Straight-A Student. (Loren Pope)

The Complete Idiot's Guide to College Planning. (O'Neal Turner, Alpha Books)

Making College Count: A Real World Look at How to Succeed In and After College. (Patrick S. O'Brien, 1996)

Smart Start: Answers to Questions Asked by First-Year College Students. (Edited by Melinda K. Dalgarn, McGraw Hill College Custom Series, 1994)

Starting Out Suburban: A Frosh Year Survival Guide. (Linda Pollard Puner, 1996)

The Ultimate College Survival Guide. (Farrar, Worthington and Farrar)

You're Officially a Grown-Up: The Graduate's Guide to Freedom, Responsibility, Happiness and Personal Hygiene. (Judith Viorst)

What Every College Student Should Know: How to Find the Best Teachers and Learn the Most from Them. (Ernie Lepore and Sarah-Jane Leslie, Rutgers University Press, 2002)

The Winning Edge: The Student-Athlete's Guide to College Scholarship. (Frances and James KillPatrick, Octameron Associates)

For Parents

A New Beginning: A Survival Guide for Parents of College Freshmen. (Kaye Bernard McGarry)

Almost Grown: Launching Your Child from High School to College. (Patricia Pasick)

And Suddenly They're Gone: What Parents Need to Know about the Empty Nest. (Patricia S. Olson)

Don't Tell Me What to Do, Just Send the Money: The Essential Parenting Guide for the College Years. (Johnson and Schelhaus-Miller)

Doors Open from Both Sides; The Off-to-College Guide from Two Points of View: Parents and Students. (Margo E. Bane Woodacre, MSW, and Steffany Bane, 2001)

Empty Nest...Full Heart: The Journey from Home to College. (Andrea Van Steenhouse)

How to Survive and Thrive in an Empty Nest: Reclaiming Your Life When Your Children Have Grown. (Robert H. Lauer and Jeannette C. Lauer)

Letting Go: A Parent's Guide to Understanding the College Years. (Karen Levin Coburn and Madge Lawrence Treeger, Harper Perennial, 1997)

Looking Beyond the Ivy League: Find the College That's Right for You. (Loren Pope, Penguin Books)

Meeting College Costs. (The College Board)

Smart Parents Guide to College: The 10 Most Important Factors for Students and Parents When Choosing a College. (Ernest L. Boyer and Paul Boyer)

When Kids Go to College. (Newman and Newman)

Other Helpful Books

100 Colleges Where Average Students Can Excel. (Joe Anne Adler, Macmillan, New York)

Barron's Compact Guide to Colleges. (Barron's Educational Services, Hauppauge, New York)

The Best 201 Colleges for the Real World. (Michael P. Violit, Octameron Associates, Alexandria, Virginia)

The Best Medical Schools. (Malaika Stoll, The Princeton Review, New York)

The Black Student's Guide to Scholarships. (Barry Beckham, Madison Books, Lanham, Maryland)

College Admissions: A Crash Course for Panicked Parents. (Sally Rubenstone and Sidonia Dalby, Macmillan, New York)

The College Admissions Mystique. (Bill Mayher; Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York)

The College Finder: Choosing the School that's Right for You. (Steven Antonoff, Ph.D, The Ballantine Publishing Group, New York)

The Complete Guide to Premedical Success. (Gregory A. Andrews, MedLaw Books, Inc., Erie, Pennsylvania.)

The Everything College Survival Book. (Jason Rich, Adams Media Corporation, Massachusetts)

The Fiske Guide to Colleges. (Edward B. Fiske, Three Rivers Press, New York)

Hillel Guide to Jewish Life on Campus. (Ruth Freedman Cerna, Princeton Review Publishing, New York)

The Hispanic Scholarship Directory. (WR Publishing, Carlsbad, California)

The Insider's Guide to the Colleges. (Yale Daily News, St. Martin's Griffin, New York)

Making a Difference: College and Graduate Guide. (Miriam Weinstein, New Society Publishers, Canada)

Making a Difference: Scholarships for a Better World. (Miriam Weinstein, New Society Publishers, Canada)

Peterson's College Money Handbook. (Peterson's, Princeton, New Jersey)

The Real Guide to Canadian Universities. (Sara Borins, Key Porter Books Limited, Canada)

The Smart Girl's Guide to College. (Cristina Page, The Noonday Press, New York)

The Unofficial Guide to College Admissions. (Shannon Turlington, IDG Books Worldwide Inc., Foster City, California)

You're Gonna Love This College Guide. (Marty Nemko, Ph.D, Barron's Educational Services, New York)