College Applications & Admissions Tips

## Early Action vs. Early Decision

* **Both** – Apply early (usually November) and receive an admission decision early (usually January or February). Early knowledge of an admissions decision can reduce stress, and even more importantly applying early at certain colleges enters you in extra scholarship opportunities.
* **Early Decision (ED)** – legally binding. Can only apply to one school ED. Agree to attend the college if accepted and offered an adequate financial aid package. Withdrawal all other applications if accepted ED. *Do Not Recommend.*
* **Early Action (EA)** – non-binding. Can apply to multiple schools EA. Not required to commit to college early. By applying EA at certain colleges you are available for extra merit-based scholarships and the opportunity to be flown out by the college for an interview. *Highly Recommend.*

## Safety/Target/Reach

* Apply to at least one college in all three categories.
* A **safety school** is a school you are guaranteed to get into – your GPA and SAT/ACT is well above the median GPA and SAT/ACT for the college.
  + *Apply to at least one financial safety school!* In this case apply to a Florida school that will have lower tuition and the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship. Even if you do not plan to attend school in Florida make sure to fill out the very simple forms for Florida Bright Futures with your high school guidance counselor.
* A **target school** is a school you will probably get into – your GPA and SAT/ACT falls within the median GPA and SAT/ACT for the college.
* A **reach school** is a school there is a lower possibility get into – your GPA and SAT/ACT falls below the median GPA and SAT/ACT for the college.

## Fit

* **Will you be happy at this school?** *This is the most important factor in deciding which schools to apply to.*
* What are you looking for? What do you want?
  + **Size** (1,000 students or 50,000 students?), **Class size** (lecture hall classes of 200 or discussion based classes of 12?), **Location** (rural, urban, sunny, snowy), **Greek** (do they have it or not?), **School focus** (Liberal Arts or Pre-Professional focus or vocational?), **Party Culture** (are the majority of students stoners? Large drinking culture?), **Student Body** (homogenous or racial/class diversity; lax bros or hipsters?)
* Reflect on yourself. Write down who you are and what your intentions are for the future. Will the school you are applying to cultivate your best Self and is it aligned with your values and personality?
* Consider majors available at the colleges of choice with the understanding that most students (50 – 70%) change their major at least once.

## Research Colleges

* There are lots of excellent colleges out there, many of which you probably haven’t heard of (but grad schools and corporations will). *Highly recommend* doing intensive research to find schools that fit your criteria and will be a good fit for you.
* The Princeton Review Book “The Best 378 Colleges” 2014 Edition
  + Basically your new bible! Highly recommend purchasing or renting this book from the library. It is a compiled, single source of information on life changing schools you may not have heard of. It has direct quotes from students and rates schools on dorms, food, professors, athletics, financial aid, etc. It also has detailed admissions info like tuition and application criteria and deadlines.
  + The number (378) changes with each edition, but any edition is a valuable reference.

## Essays

* Do not simply write your resume in essay format. Admission offices already have your resume. Instead focus on a small event/person/place/feeling and write about it with a plethora of narrative detail. **Tell a story**.
* Have an English teacher or adult you trust read over your essays and provide critical feedback.
* Examples of “Essays that Worked” are at <https://apply.jhu.edu/apply/essays-that-worked/2018/>

## Scholarships

* There are three forms of financial aid: 1) Loans that have to be repaid, 2) grants and scholarships that do not have to be repaid, and 3) employment programs like work-study.
* Every single person should fill out the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid](https://www.fafsa-application.com/home.php) (FAFSA) at <https://www.fafsa-application.com/home.php>
  + Begin filling the FAFSA out in January
* **Ask for it!** After receiving letters of financial aid from colleges write a letter explaining your financial situation and why extra aid is necessary. (*Personal story: I did this to three colleges I was accepted to and two of the three responded with additional financial aid* ☺ )
* I made available an extensive list of[**STEM Scholarship$**](http://www.weebly.com/weebly/main.php)at <http://girlscandostem.weebly.com/stem-scholarship.html>

## Stay Connected

Websites like [TheProspect.net](http://www.theprospect.net/) the largest student-run college access organization in the world dedicated to helping other young people survive high school, totally own the college admissions process, and excel in college and beyond through informative articles, humor. The co-founder is a local girl from Ponte Vedra, Florida Lily Herman.

*If you are looking for an AMAZING college experience: Apply to the* [*Claremont Colleges*](http://www.claremont.edu/)*!*