

# How to make your college applications shine



## **Follow the application directions, no matter what.**

This isn't the time to showcase your creativity by adding pictures, unsolicited letters, art, or other extras. To put it simply, if colleges don't ask for it, don't provide it.

Colleges don't generally want lots of additional things like videos, extra resumés, or copies of certificates. Just send what they

ask for, and make sure everything is thorough and complete.

This is one of the most important takeaways for students. Don't just fill out an application in an hour and then send it off. Get a fresh set of eyes on the application first. Proofread it and then proofread it again.



## Explain why this college is the right college for you.

Admission committees try to weed out students who are less likely to accept an offer of admission because those students lower the school's yield number (the percentage of accepted students who enroll), which is used to determine a college's national ranking. One

sure way to signal you won't accept an offer to enroll is to sound like you don't know or care much about that college.

LF Educational Consulting spends time helping students understand what goes into writing a good essay, and she encourages them to be clear as to why they are applying to each specific college.



## Be You 24/7.

Colleges understand that they're getting applications from high school students, which means that a lot of them are going to have similar experiences. It's really what they make of those experiences that I think will help

their applications to stand out.

Authenticity requires students to find their voice to be able to tell their own story.

To communicate one's qualities and experiences, students need to find their own authentic voice; everyone has a unique narrative, and it is up to the student to go deep and find it. Moreover, good writing is needed to articulate and communicate that narrative well.



**Your essay should be as unique as you are.**

This is the one place where the admissions committee really hears directly from the student. It should portray something about the student that goes deeper than their paperwork. The focus could be something small—like a special event, a

favorite place, or a challenge they've faced—but if students can do a good job with this, it can really make an application standout

If students take this advice, then the essay shouldn't just be a summary of their resumé or transcript. It should tell their story of how they came to be the student and the person they are today.

# EARLY DECISION 1



*November 1*

## **Consider Early Decision or Early Action Options.**

Consider Early Options  
Increasingly, colleges are admitting students through an early decision process.

According to NACAC, 21% of colleges offer early decision plans. Between fall 2016 and fall 2017, colleges reported a 5% average increase in the number of early decision applicants admitted. Early decision is binding, meaning the students promise to attend the college if accepted.

LF Educational Consulting says “students who opt for early decision should be certain the school is right for them. This is particularly true when it comes to financial aid because accepting a binding early decision offer means students will not be able to compare aid packages between schools.

One significant downside to an early binding commitment is that the student will only receive one financial aid package. If a student wants to consider the best financial aid available to him/her, Early Decision may not be the best choice. But there is some wiggle room with the binding agreement. The agreement is based on an honor code and not typically legally binding. Some schools share lists of early decision applicants with one another, meaning that a student is likely to be caught if he or she agrees to an early decision option at multiple institutions.





## **Demonstrated Interest in the Colleges.**

As it becomes easier for students to apply to multiple schools electronically and by using the Common Application admissions officers are alert for "stealth candidates" who do nothing but fill out the forms. If you want to be taken seriously, "you've got to show them some love

Visiting is the best way to get a feel for schools and show you're interested. Take the college tour, but also meet with admissions officers. Ask questions. If you can't visit, take advantage of local college fairs and every other option for contact.

Even checking emails from a college can be a way to demonstrate interest. Some schools track the rates at which prospective students open emails sent by the college, while other schools don't consider demonstrated at all, online or offline.

LF Educational Consulting suggests focusing on your top 6 colleges. So really deciding which colleges you are genuinely interested in and keeping a balanced list and doing that as early as possible, spring or summer before senior year is ideal.



**Manage your online presence.**

It's important to delete inappropriate Facebook photos or tweets, but you should also use your online presence to boost the strength of your applications. Jessica Givens, the author of "Get Your Summer Strategy On," encourages students to build a website as a showcase for their talents. "Every college admission official today sits only a few feet from a computer.

A website is a powerful record of time spent, and interests explored. Applicants want to make sure they put the web address on their applications, both in the activities section and on their personal resumé.



**Your volunteerism should highlight your passions.**

Students always include their club and volunteer experience in a college application. But it shouldn't be a round-up of everything you've

done from 1st grade onwards. Instead, your volunteer work should reflect your passions, your commitments, and your goals

Do what you love. If you are passionate about politics, think about volunteering for a campaign. Following that same example, if you are a student passionate about nature, then make sure they are doing volunteer work related to the environment. Or, if you are a

student thinking about a career in the sciences, make sure their activities and extracurriculars support this.

Tag: College applications, High school seniors, High school juniors,

College application season