

Harvest - College Counseling

Senior Year College Application Tips

Teacher Letters of Recommendation

You may need to ask several teachers for letters of recommendation; check the fine print on your applications. You must give those teachers any teacher report forms for completion and an addressed, stamped envelope for each school. Inform your teachers about your deadline requirements and follow up to ensure that the letters/forms are mailed by the deadline. At the end of the process, it would be thoughtful to write a thank-you note to the teachers who wrote recommendations for you, both to thank and to let them know your plans. *You should give the selected teachers at least two weeks for this process.*

Securing Applications

You can secure college applications by mail, phone call, from visiting college reps, or over the Internet. Most schools now ask for you to complete an on-line application or at least begin the process that way.

Some suggestions to help in the process are as follows:

- Photocopy the applications to give you a rough draft from which to type or handwrite your essay. Most of your teachers are happy to review essays or personal statements if they are presented early enough.
- Remember to include your name and social security number on each sheet you add to your application materials. You should write both on the memo line of your application fee check (if you do not pay it on-line).
- The Harvest counseling office requires at least a TWO WEEK turnaround time for your official transcript or counselor letter and form to be created and completed. EARLIER IS BETTER whenever possible!
- You should photocopy the completed application before you mail it.
- Electronic applications also require a two week turnaround time for the Harvest counseling office in order for the materials to be mailed to the college by conventional US mail to meet the due date.

Be sure you have taken the ACT or SAT

You can pick up registration packets and study guides in the school counseling office or register on-line at www.act.org or www.collegeboard.com. You need to read the study guides, take the practice tests, and then go over what you missed on the practice tests. To help with additional preparation for both the ACT and the SAT REASONING TEST, there are numerous books, DVD's, computer programs and prep courses available.

SAT II or SAT Subject Area Tests

SAT II's or Subject Tests are one hour tests which measure a student's knowledge of specific subjects (e.g. Biology, World History, French, etc.) Some of the more selective colleges require or recommend that applicants take these tests. You should carefully check your prospective college websites to see if the SAT II is a requirement for admission. You can sign up for these tests at www.collegeboard.com.

Personal Statement

Along with an interview and essay, this statement gives you an opportunity to add your own personal touch to the application. This statement can be optional, but it is an opportunity to add another dimension to your application, for example, why you might have chosen a particular career or who in your life may have influenced you. This is a good place to share why you may have made some of the academic decisions you made. You can either personalize the statement for each college or photocopy it for each application you submit. Please note that this type of statement can also enhance scholarship applications later on. Remember to put your name and social security number on the top and try to keep the essay to one page.

Personal Data Sheet or Resume

The personal data sheet provides a brief overview of your life both in and out of high school but does not usually include academic information since that is available on your transcript.

A resume can include academic, employment, and personal information. Either can be a good addition to scholarship applications. You may be required to provide copies for applications and scholarships. Most colleges ask for something along these lines.

Top Ten Reasons Students Don't Get Accepted to College:

1. ***Application was submitted late, that is, after the college's first deadline.***

(Tip: Know all college deadlines and submit your application and other admissions requirements well in advance of any deadlines. The best time to submit college applications is between September 15th and November 1st.)

2. ***Application was incomplete or done sloppily and carelessly with cross outs, misspellings, and different colored inks and pencil.***

(Tip: Make a copy of the application before filling it out and use the copy as a worksheet. Then transfer all information neatly and legibly to the college application.)

3. ***Didn't follow up on application to see that all information, application fee, transcripts, SAT scores, etc. were submitted properly and received by college.***

(Tip: Several weeks after submitting an application follow up with a phone call or letter to the college admissions office to ensure all materials have been received.)

4. ***Low grades, low test scores, and little if any involvement in school-related activities.***

(Tip: Study hard every day, prepare for SAT/ACT's, and take a serious interest in school clubs, sports, plays, etc.)

5. ***Didn't request an interview (private colleges) or didn't go to admissions interview prepared with scholastic records, resume, or pertinent questions to ask.***

(Tip: Arrange for a tour of the college campus and an admission interview and go to the interview prepared.)

6. ***Showed little if any interest in school. Applied only because friends were applying.***

(Tip: Your friends who are important now may not be important in a month, or a year. Choose your college based on the best fit for you, not for your friends.)

7. ***Didn't take appropriate high school courses in relation to intended college choice.***

(Tip: Consult with your school counselor about your course selection in relation to your school interest. Taking the right senior courses can make the difference.)

8. ***Student had a poor resume or no resume at all.***

(Tip: English teachers will show you how to write or polish your resume. Be sure to include what you have accomplished and what you are currently doing.)

9. ***Student was not involved in school or community.***

(Tip: Get involved in anything that benefits your school or community in some way.)

10. ***Student did not write an admissions essay when given the option of writing one.***

(Tip: Write about something you like, like to do, or are good at, and have several people including an English teacher or two read the essay for improvements. Not writing an essay shows a lack of interest, and a poorly written essay shows a lack of concern.)