

SOME GUIDELINES FOR ADMISSION TO THE COLLEGE OF YOUR CHOICE

NINTH GRADE

DO take the college preparatory track at your school.

DO take challenging elective courses.

DO take a foreign language.

DO begin volunteer work. Colleges look for concerned and active students.

DO get involved in activities in school and think about becoming a leader. Colleges look for students with a variety of interests.

DO take beginning algebra (even if you don't care what $X + Y$ equals). If you took algebra in eighth grade, more power to you! Start Algebra II – Geometry.

DO make yourself read at least one unassigned book each month. Avid readers do better in high school and tend to get into better colleges.

DON'T expect skills in computer games to convince colleges that you understand computers.

DON'T assume *Seventeen* or *Sports Illustrated* is among the "classics" that colleges talk about.

TENTH GRADE

DO continue with a foreign language.

DO take geometry (and more algebra if it's offered). Your accelerated pace will be of interest to the best colleges.

DO consider taking the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) to learn how you do with this kind of test.

DO begin talking with your parents about college. But don't decide on or rule out any at this point.

DO visit some local colleges (even if you're not really interested in them) to get a sense of size and atmosphere. Visit a large university, a small college, an urban college, a small-town college and so on.

DON'T assume that English grammar will have no practical use if you become a scientist or an accountant. You'll have to write in any career you choose.

DON'T assume your talents in a sport, the band, or yearbook sales will compensate for lackluster grades.

ELEVENTH GRADE

DO take trigonometry.

DO continue with a foreign language.

DO take the PSAT, the SAT and/or the ACT.

DO make an appointment with your guidance counselor.

DO talk about colleges with people you respect. Teachers, friends of your parents, or the people you work for can provide valuable insight.

DO go to College Fairs or College Night programs.

DO visit all the colleges to which you plan to apply. If you can't visit, ask the college to send a videotape (if available) and information about the region (not just the college).

DON'T avoid Advanced Placement courses because you think they may lower your class rank or grade point average. Colleges realize that AP courses are more difficult. They also indicate that you seek and can handle challenging courses.

DON'T think you have to choose a major field or career path before you choose a college. College should be a place to learn more about your interests and abilities.

DON'T rule out selective colleges because you didn't do particularly well in ninth or tenth grade. Colleges look for improvement in performance as a sign that you can and will do the work.

DON'T ignore all the promotional mailings you'll receive from colleges in April and May. They'll help you find the schools that are best for you. They're also an indication of the kind and quality of college to which you're likely to be accepted. (Selection of names is based on your high school record and your standardized test scores, among other criteria.)

TWELFTH GRADE

DO consider taking some AP or RCI courses.

DO take a challenging mathematics course. Even though some colleges require three years of mathematics, selective colleges favor students with four or more.

DO try to enjoy the admissions process. Think of it as a chance to make a big decision on your own and an opportunity to learn about yourself.

DO write an application essay that describes you, not what you think an admissions officer wants to hear. Selective colleges seek diverse and interesting people. Sounding like everyone else won't help you.

DON'T expect your mother, father, brother, favorite aunt or best friend to write your application essay. Colleges want to know what you think. Besides, admissions fold aren't easily fooled.

DON'T try to "pad" your application by joining every club and organization available this year. Colleges look for a continued and genuine interest in activities and evidence of leadership.

DON'T miss application deadlines. Most selective colleges will not accept late applications.

DON'T snap at a staff member at a college just because the process sometimes gets frustrating. (Being courteous can work to everyone's advantage.)

DON'T apply to more than six colleges. Select carefully, not randomly.

DON'T rule out a college at this point because it seems to cost too much. All colleges have financial aid available for talented and deserving students who have a real need.

DON'T be disappointed if you are not accepted into your first choice college. Selective colleges must choose from many qualified applicants. They base their choices on a variety of considerations, not just abilities. **There is no one perfect college for you.** In fact, you may find your second choice a better fit.