

How to apply to college with that all-important edge

There's only one moment in time when the student's paperwork shows up in the admissions office, and it better shine. Contrary to popular belief, colleges initially look to reject students, as far more *qualified* applicants apply than can attend. Qualified students must become acceptable and gain that decisive edge, because even those with stellar grades and SAT's can face rejection. This past year, Harvard rejected 80% of all valedictorians who applied; the reason - sameness.

It all begins in the 9th grade, when students enter high school, and here's what they must accomplish by the time they apply to college: successfully *negotiate* for the best grades; learn a minimum of ten new words weekly; only belong to a few clubs, but be an officer in each one; amass 100's of hours of community service (strive for more than 1,000); obtain extraordinary letters of recommendation; write dozens of practice essays; excel in AP and Honors classes, and make official college visits. When a student accomplishes all this, they are *guaranteed* that all-important edge when it comes time to apply.

If the college applied to use the Common Application (CA) and a school specific one as well, it could very likely spell disaster to submit the CA. They'll perceive it as, "you didn't care enough to send the very best." Never submit an application online, if offered a choice. Horror stories tell of applications going into cyberspace, with no realization until springtime.

The first item reviewed, the transcript, reveals qualifying numbers or else. The application comes next. Use a current version of Adobe Acrobat to turn a college application into a PDF file, and when the finished product comes out of your printer in the school's colors, it will display a professional looking appearance. They'll be anxious to read it, regardless of what you said. Review it several times for accuracy. For example: the Florida state specific application asks the following, "Please check your ethnicity," and the correct answer better show a *checkmark!*

The essays, your most important piece of writing follow. At this point I highly recommend a "special essay." If the schools applied to don't ask the question, "Why are you applying?" then you must tell them why, in no uncertain terms. Be passionate. Pretend it's the 1950's, Albert Einstein teaches Physics at Princeton. Perhaps it's the 1930's, Robert Frost teaches Poetry at the University of Chicago, and you've written poems since 3rd grade. Submitting this composition will absolutely add points to anyone's GPA. If the school asks that specific question, then write a companion piece; "We All Know What XYZ U Can Offer The World, Let Me Tell You What I Can Offer XYZ." Use bullet points and begin every one with an "I."

A resume beginning with junior high or earlier follows. Unless yours contains several pages of high school awards, then more of your accomplishments are necessary, because nothing prior to 9th grade appears on a college application. Another fatal error to avoid; don't send the entire package regular mail – it could get lost, or worse. Use an overnight service or priority mail with delivery confirmation.