

After reading the handout on how to choose a college, you should be well on your way to narrowing down a few choices for college. The next step is the application process. Here are a few tips to aid you in this process:

Admission Criteria

Colleges' admission selection are usually based on five basic types: open, liberal, traditional, selective and highly selective: **open** (all high school graduate are accepted, Average ACT 16-21); **liberal** (some freshman accepted who are in lower half of their class, Average ACT 17-22); **traditional** (the majority of freshman are in the top 50% of their high school class, Average ACT 18-24); **selective** (the majority of freshman are in the top 25% of their class, Average 21-26); **highly selective** (the majority of freshman accepted are in the top 10% of their class, Average ACT 25-30). If you want to get accepted into a highly selective or selective college, then you need more than excellent grades. You have to stand out. Take leadership roles, volunteer, organize an event, excel in your field of study or win awards. Colleges may use several criteria besides ACT/SAT scores when choosing to accept an application, and may choose which one or more they rank as most important when making that decision. The criteria for selection can be one or more of the following: ACT/SAT scores, G.P.A., class rank, state OGT scores, strength of high school coursework, recommendations, essay, interview, activities, sports, special skills or talent, achievements and/or awards, and grades in college classes while in high school. Applications can be accepted, deferred (postpone acceptance or denial until a later date), waitlisted (put on a wait list for possible opening) or denied.

High School

The visual measure of your high school academic achievement is recorded in your transcript such as class ranking, G.P.A., grades, OGT test scores, and ACT/SAT scores. Colleges look at the rigor of your high school coursework. If your grades are low, then it is not too late to bring them up. **Official high school transcripts must be requested from your home school guidance department.** In addition to the transcript that is submitted with your application, colleges will request a final transcript with your final grades. Check with your home school guidance department to make sure they send a final transcript. **Colleges can rescind your application if your grades slip, so stay on top of your grades.** Do not succumb to senioritis. Many schools will also consider extra-curricular activities, sports, awards, talents, and work history when making a decision to accept or reject an application. Many colleges are also requesting high school disciplinary records, so stay out of trouble.

Entrance Exams

Most colleges use standardized entrance exams (ACT or SAT) for admissions. If you are a senior you need to have taken the test by now, and juniors should take the test this year. Packets are available in guidance. Most state colleges will look at G.P.A. and ACT/SAT scores for acceptance into their college and acceptance into a certain program of study. If you are on a free or reduced lunch, do not forget to see your TCTC guidance counselor for a fee waiver to take the ACT/SAT free of charge. Most colleges also use additional institutional tests to determine college placement in English and math courses. Doing poorly on either tests may mean you have to take several remediation classes before you can take the college level class you need for your major. This will cost you not only time, but a lot of money. This is why it is so important that you take the most rigorous high school level English and math courses available. **Juniors, keep this in mind when you are scheduling your classes for next year.**

Early admissions

Some colleges offer the student the option of applying early. Two types of early admissions are early action and early decision. Early action students can only apply to one college, and if accepted they have the option of rescinding their application. **Early decision students also apply to one college only, but if accepted, they must accept the offer.** Many of the nations' top colleges have opted out of the early admission program. Check with your college of choice to see if this option is available. Knowing early if you are accepted to the your number one college is one of the biggest advantages of this program; however, the chance that your application is rejected is higher if you choose this option. This option puts you at a disadvantage if you change your mind. Students applying early admission may have their application deferred - the college postpones the admission decision. Deferred students need to increase their chances for admission by boosting their application by improving grades and test scores.

Deadlines

Know and follow the deadlines of each college you plan on attending. Missing deadlines may mean lost college or financial aid opportunities.

Application

You can do most college applications online or you can call and request that an application be sent to you; however, some colleges only accept online applications. Over 300 colleges in the United States use what is called the *Common Application*—one application for all 300 colleges. Review the instructions before you start to complete the application. Neatness counts. Do not submit your application without having someone review it for mistakes. Keep a copy of your application. If you are on a free or reduced lunch, your home school guidance counselor may be able to supply you with a fee waiver. Note: not all colleges accept fee waivers.

Personal Statement or Essay

Most colleges require a personal statement or essay as part of the application. Follow instructions carefully and stay within the required word count. This is one of the best ways for schools to evaluate you as an unique person and for you to highlight personal achievements or positive assets. Do not just list attributes or talents, but be specific and detailed. Admission officers look for enthusiasm, creativity, talent, ability to communicate, and imagination. Be yourself and be honest. Do not give inappropriate self-disclosures. Check for grammar and spelling errors. Have your English teacher help with your topic or review your final draft.

Letters of Recommendation

Letters of recommendation often help to decide whether an applicant will be accepted or rejected. Follow the colleges' suggestions for whom you should have write your recommendations. Letters should be from an educator who knows you personally and who has had a chance to evaluate your academic work, especially if you excelled. You should choose a person who knows you personally, can give examples of your work and character, and who can speak of your leadership abilities. Give the person writing the recommendation a profile of yourself, a resume, points you want highlighted, the deadline, and a name and address of where to send the letter. **It is recommended that you waive the right to read your recommendations.** Most colleges will consider a recommendation that is waived more reliable. Give your writers at least three weeks to write your letter. Check with your writers to make sure that they send your recommendation on time. Once the letter is written, send your writer a thank-you note.

Resume

As part of your TCTC career portfolio, you will write a resume. Make sure you include your work experience, school and extracurricular activities, athletic activities (year and type), athletic awards, community or volunteer activities, academic honors, and awards or recognitions. Emphasize all leadership roles.

Interviews

Most colleges do not require an interview. Some colleges do require an interview or give a student the option to request an interview. The interview is a great way to persuade a college to accept your application while giving you an opportunity to learn more about the college. The same rules apply for interviewing for a college as interviewing for a job: dress appropriately, be neat, arrive early, be courteous, and ask questions. Shake hands while maintaining eye contact. Sit up straight. Bring along extra copies of your resume and personal information to give to any interviewer who does not have a copy. Know the history of the college. Be prepared to tell the interviewer about yourself, your goals, and why you want to attend this college. Thank the interviewer at the end, and follow with a personal handwritten thank-you note.

Application Checklist

- √ Cover letter
- √ Completed application form
- √ Official transcript with ACT/SAT scores
- √ College Prep form for selected Ohio State colleges
- √ Application fee
- √ Student resume
- √ Essay or personal statement
- √ Letters of recommendation
- √ Certified copies of any national exams
- √ Any other documents requested by the college

Note: all documents become property of the university once submitted.

Letters of acceptance or refusal

Acceptance or refusal letters usually arrive before the middle of April. Many students wait for financial aid packages (which typically also arrive by the same time) before they decide which college to attend. You should notify the college in writing that you accept or decline their application offer.

Good luck in college!