

TIPS FOR PARENTS AND STUDENTS APPLYING TO COLLEGE



When are the deadlines for college applications?

The most common college deadlines for application are:

January 1

January 15

February 1

February 15

so plan accordingly.

How many schools should someone apply to?

The number of schools you should apply to is seven.

Seven is a good, you know, average figure. I mean, I have talked to kids who will say, “I’m applying to 20” and that is just totally not necessary. What you really want to do is you want to put two or three reach schools, those are schools that are your dream schools but when you look at your academic profile, you’re slightly below the average, but you’re going to give it a shot anyway, either because you have some kind of hook that this school wants, you’re a recruited athlete, you come from a different geographic area. There are lots of reasons that you could be attractive to a school other than your GPA. Then you want to concentrate on three to four target schools. Those are schools where you’ve got a solid chance of getting in. It is not a guarantee, but you fit the academic profile of a school’s entering class, you’ve got a solid extracurricular record

What about applying to “safety schools”?

And you really only need one safety, but a “safety school”, contrary to what many people think, is a school you really should be excited about. It should be a school that you know you can get into that you would be very happy if you had to go there.

What about essays: One essay to fit every school?

Two Essays: Long essay, short essay. If you come up with a general topic, like somebody who has had an influence on your life, somebody you would want to have lunch with – those are topics that you can massage and tweak and use in lots of different contexts. So, concentrate on one long essay, one short essay, and then tweak them accordingly.

Please explain tweaking. What kind of things should you do in terms of tweaking an essay? What are you looking for?

Well, for example, one question might say “Talk about somebody who has had a big influence on your life,” and then another question might say,” Name somebody you would want to have lunch with, if you could have lunch with anybody. You can take that first essay and just tweak it a little bit and turn it into the second essay.

Should the essay tell a story?

Absolutely. Admission officers are human beings and they are reading thousands of these applications. You do not want to bore them, so don't philosophize, don't pontificate, you know, tell a story that's going to hold somebody's interest. Contrary to what many people say to you, the topic is irrelevant. You can write about what you see when you wake up in the morning, as long as what you write about is a compelling, interesting story that says something about you as a person.

In Summary

1. Be aware of all application deadlines
2. Focus on 7 schools
3. Develop 1 short and 1 long essay
4. Tweak the essays to support any specific application
5. Let the essay tell an interesting and informative story

The information here was partially transcribed from an NBC television interview (December 2004) with Eva Ostrum of 'Collegebroadband'. For additional information please visit www.collegebroadband.com.