

# COMMON COLLEGE ADMISSION MYTHS

**There's only one "Dream School":** Many parents & students believe there is only one dream school. In reality, no college is perfect and there are likely lots of colleges where a student will thrive.

**College rankings mean everything:** College rankings may provide useful insights but they are often focused on things like donations, faculty credentials and admissions statistics that can be easily manipulated. Do your own research and choose colleges based on your priorities.

**I should only apply to top colleges:** There are thousands of schools offering an exceptional education & an amazing college experience - most of which you've never even heard of! Don't believe me? I recommend the book: "Where You Go Is Not Who You'll Be," written by Frank Bruni.

**I'll never get in:** Just because you don't have all A+s in every advanced class your high school offers, you aren't a 3 season athlete & captain and you don't work 20 hours a week running your own research business aimed at curing cancer, you CAN get into college! In fact, only 60-80 colleges (out of ~4000 across the US) are highly selective. The national average for college acceptance is roughly 70%. Be realistic, keep an open mind and create a balanced college list.

**Going to a liberal arts college is a waste of time & money:** A liberal arts college has many advantages including a focus on undergraduates, smaller classes, easy access to professors and merit aid to name a few. Graduating with a well rounded education prepares students for success in many different career fields. Employers often look to hire those who can think critically - a hallmark of a liberal arts education.

**I need to go to a big college if I want a social life:** Small colleges often have robust student life organizations that arrange events and trips. Small colleges can also have big time sports, Greek life, and lots of school spirit as well.

**I must know my major:** Students do not have to know what they want to major in before they apply to college. Studies show approximately 30% of college students change their major at least once!

**I should take easy classes to keep a high GPA:** While GPA is important, so is showing colleges you are motivated to challenge yourself and that you can do well in more rigorous classes like AP or dual enrollment. Balance is key.

**I should take every AP/IB/DE class offered:** Showing that you can do well in rigorous classes is important but having a healthy and well balanced high school experience is ideal. Don't overload your class schedule and risk burnout and distress. Balance is key.

**Colleges want lots of activities:** Having extracurriculars that show a depth of involvement in activities that are meaningful to you matters most. Showing growth and leadership over time is better than a random, disconnected list of activities.



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**A letter of recommendation should come from a teacher who taught a class where I got an A:** A letter of recommendation should come from a teacher who knows you well and can speak to your character, work ethic, love of learning, ability to work in groups, how you handle a challenging topic etc. These are valuable insights not seen elsewhere in your application.

**I have nothing to write about:** Many students think they have to have a remarkable life story to write about in their college essay and struggle to even get started. Your college essay is a personal statement (it's literally called that) and should focus on what makes you, you.

**I don't have to write the supplemental essays if they are optional:** You should always take the opportunity to tell admissions more about what makes you, you. For most students, most of the time, don't skip the optional supplemental essays!

**Interviews don't matter:** If a college offers you the opportunity to participate in an alumni or admissions interview, take it. Not doing so, can indicate to a college that you are not really that interested in attending.

**SAT or ACT scores don't matter:** While there are still lots of colleges that are test optional, more are requiring them once again. Even for test optional colleges, good test scores can result in additional financial aid.

**Social media won't affect my chances:** Yes it can! Admissions officers may look at your social media accounts so make smart posting choices. You can consider keeping all your accounts private if you must. You can also use social media to your advantage by posting content & photos that show your wholesome, caring and curious self.

**Private colleges are too expensive/my state college will cost less:** At face value, the cost of attending college is incredibly high no matter where you enroll. But the truth is, the net price that students pay for college is complex and can differ for everyone (even those at the same school!) Sometimes, private colleges can be the same or even less than your in-state option.

**I won't qualify for financial aid so I'm not filling out the FAFSA or CSS Profile:** Never assume anything when it comes to financial aid. While you may be able to predict what federal financial aid might look like, colleges have different processes when it comes to providing merit or need-based aid to their students.

**I'll figure out how to pay for college later:** No you won't. When researching a school and building your college list, make financial fit a part of the conversation.

**If I get recruited to play sports, I'll get a full ride:** Full-ride athletic scholarships are extremely rare. According to the NCAA only 1% of college athletes receive a full-ride scholarship.

