



Tips for Navigating the College Admissions Process

College! All the years of helping your teen study, prep and plan have paid off and college application time has arrived. It's exciting. But once you get a look at the number of things you need to do, it can feel overwhelming.

While ultimately your teen is responsible for applying to colleges, there are ways you can help them wade through the admissions process. To avoid taking the awesome out of your college admissions experience, here are some tips to help you:

Start early. The earlier you get started planning, the better. That way, you avoid the last minute crush. In fact if it's possible, start planning in the 8th grade, while your child is still in middle school. That might seem early, but in terms of college readiness, 8th grade is the new 11th grade! That way, you can think big picture, mapping out courses and extracurriculars over the four-year span of high school. It also gives you time to learn about financial aid and plan accordingly. And, starting early has the added advantage of allowing you and your teen to visit campuses well in advance of the application crunch time. This will help your teen to understand what kinds of colleges appeal to them most, and thereby help them to narrow their application field. If your teen is already in high school, the sooner you can start getting familiar with the process, the better.

Check in with your teen. For the college admissions process to go smoothly, you and your teen need to be on the same page, both academically and financially. Talk with your teen about their hopes and goals for college. And, have a frank discussion about what is financially feasible for your family. Not only are colleges themselves expensive, but the applications can get costly. Based on your teen's academic goals and your family's finances, make realistic goals about the number and types of colleges your teen applies to.

Set goals. Now that you've talked with your teen about their goals, make them concrete. Have a goal-setting session with your teen. Write down the long-term goals and break them into short-term goals. Put them on the calendar and talk with your teen about strategies for achieving them. To review mySylvan's article on the importance of goal setting, [click here](#).

Get organized. The to-do list will be your first line of defense. Help your teen get a checklist going and update it regularly. Calendar the important deadlines, including financial aid applications, college applications and college interviews.

Gather your financial info. If you are applying for financial aid, you will need to fill out a number of forms that require detailed financial info. Find out what's needed so that you can gather it ahead of time and have it ready to go when it's application time.

Use your high school. Your teen's high school counselor is a font of information about the college process, so if you have questions about the process, don't be shy. In addition, many



high schools host college-planning parents' nights that walk you through the process. Find out what resources your teen's school offers.

Take advantage of technology. Many colleges now use virtual application filing systems, and many do interviews via videoconference. In addition, various apps can help keep you and your teen organized, from scheduling deadline reminders to allowing your teen to make notes on the fly for their college essays. Take advantage of tech to make your lives easier.

One extra tip for avoiding stress: It may be tempting to want to take control of the process, particularly since the long-sought-after college finish line is so close. However, micromanaging your teen will only cause you both stress. So while you can, and should, support and encourage your teen, try to resist the urge to totally take over. In the end, it's up to them to narrow the college list, fill out the applications, write the essay and do any interviews.

Remember, while the college admissions process may seem like a whirlwind of to-do's, staying supportive of your teen with these guidelines will help make the process more of a breeze.