

HOW TO USE YOUR SCHOOL COUNSELOR

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School counselors are one of the best sources of support for students who plan to go to college. They can provide guidance and support throughout the entire process. If you are lucky enough to have access to a counselor in your school, it is in your best interest to visit that person on a regular basis.

Throughout your high school years, your counselor can help you:

- Plan classes that will prepare you for college admission and success.
- Review your academic record and suggest areas that need improvement. If you need to do some catching up, your counselor can help.
- Begin the admission process by identifying the questions you should be asking—and finding honest answers.
- Clarify and understand terms that you will encounter during your college search and selection process.
- Identify special opportunities that may maximize your chances of being a well-prepared and appealing candidate to colleges.
- Register for college admission tests, like the SAT and ACT.
- Secure applications, identify deadlines, and prioritize the tasks you need to complete as you apply for college.
- Apply for fee waivers when signing up for tests or submitting applications.
- Polish your applications and any required college essays so that the product you send to colleges will represent the best of your thinking and writing abilities. (Make sure you take a rough draft to your counselor early on. Leave plenty of time for revision and rewriting.)
- Explore options to pay for college.
- Provide a letter of recommendation to colleges or universities.
- Compare offers of admission and financial aid.

Most school counselors advise several students. Here are a few things you can do to make it easier for your counselor to provide you with assistance:

- Make appointments early and show up on time.
- Submit any forms that require counselor completion well in advance of due dates.
- Carefully follow any procedures that have been established by your school for securing transcripts and turning in applications and related forms.
- Whenever possible, make copies of everything you give to your counselor. Sometimes, with so much paper, things get lost.
- Make sure you keep your counselor in the loop when colleges inform you of their admission decisions. If there are any problems which arise, your counselor can advocate on your behalf.
- Whenever you have questions don't hesitate to return to your counselor for advice, especially if you feel you are being asked by a college to do something that just doesn't seem right. Your counselor will know the rules governing college admission.
- If you think it would be helpful, try to schedule a meeting with your counselor and your family. There are parts of the college application process that will require their assistance. This is particularly true when it comes time to complete financial aid applications.
- Finally, when all is said and done, and you have made it successfully through the college selection and admission process, make sure you take time to thank your counselor. Your expression of gratitude will build a reservoir of goodwill should you need to return for further assistance at any time in the future.