



How Many Colleges or Universities Should You Apply To?

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How many schools should a student apply to? Is this too many? Should I apply to more? Some of the pressing questions a student may be thinking about as they begin the application process.



Experts from Success Pathway will tackle this question and assist you in resolving this uncertainty. We will offer advice on how many schools your student should apply for and clarify the variables to weigh when choosing how many universities to apply to. Following our guide, you will feel more at ease in developing a college and university application list, and what length is suitable for your student.

No Correct Number of Applications

The amount of schools your student should apply to rely on your personal situation. Our consultants at Success Pathway advise that anywhere between 1 and 10 applications is sufficient. **Other experts believe that most students should submit applications to approximately 6-8 colleges or universities: including 2-3 reach schools; 2-3 fit or match schools and 2 safety schools.**

Important terms to know:

- [Reach schools](#) are colleges or universities that are unlikely to offer you admission (less than a 30% chance)
- [Fit or Match schools](#) are colleges or universities that you have a decent chance of gaining admission to (a 30%-80% chance)
- [Safety schools](#) are colleges or universities to which you're almost guaranteed admission based upon your a (greater than an 80% chance)



When choosing a college or university and the number of schools to which your student should apply relies on your position and your preferences. If your student has chosen to apply under early decision (ED) or early action (EA) to a school, then you may only have to apply for one school, unless rejected or waitlisted. If your applicant registers as an ED applicant, you will

complete your submission in November. You should obtain a reply in advance of the periodic acceptance time, typically by December which is when application deadlines are for most colleges or universities. If accepted, your student is bound to that school, and must attend.

In case your student isn't accepted under ED, your he/she should still have a roster of schools for which to apply, since the school's close their applications by December, such as the [University of California](#). But, if accepted to ED, your student needs to relinquish all other college applications and offers.

Why Your Student May Want To Apply to More Schools?

Admission to "prestigious" schools or universities is very competitive. Therefore, if your student wants to attend a variety of selective schools, you should ensure that you have a number of target and safety schools. Applying to reach schools is not only costly (registration charges and travel to tour colleges), but can also be mentally stressful, as there is a higher possibility of rejection. Applying to fit and safety schools would allow your student to have better possibilities of acceptance, and you may need to only apply to three or four schools.

Why Your Student May Want To Apply to Fewer Schools

There are a number of factors that impact the number of colleges or universities your student should apply for admission. We have listed them below.

Applications Are Expensive= Money and Time

Applying to many schools can be expensive, each requiring about \$75 fee. There are more costs when submitting your AP test scores, and SAT, ACT and TOEFL scores. So it is not advised to apply to many schools, as it can be very costly, and each application be thought out.

After taking the SAT, which runs up \$64.50, or the ACT, which costs about \$51.00, you can submit four score reports to the desired school for free. However, once exceeding the first four, each report costs \$11.25 for the SAT and \$12 for the ACT per school. If your student took an AP course, he/she qualifies for one AP score report to be sent free. Each AP exam costs \$94 to take, and each additional score report is \$15.

Applying to 20 schools can cost you more than \$2000, so budgeting and planning out your applications is crucial. As a parent, budgeting this process out is very important. Once accepted into a school, your student will have an irreplaceable experience. Sending your child off to college is a long term investment. They will leave the school prepared for future



professions, which makes these fees worth it in the end. Compared to the tuition and [cost of attendance](#), the cost of applications and reports is significantly less, but it is still important to plan it out.

In addition, it requires a lot of time and dedication for the application phase. Despite the fact that numerous colleges accept the [Common Application](#) or [Coalition Application](#), which allows you to apply to multiple schools through one application, most schools have individualized written responses. **Consequently, each school will still require a few hours to complete essays and applications. You should ensure that your student has sufficient space in their schedule to finish all of their applications successfully on top of schoolwork and other obligations.**



Your Student Has Specific Needs That Only a Few Colleges Meet

However, if your student has their mind set on a specific college or university in a particular location or has plans to pursue a major only offered in a select college, you may choose to only apply to 3-5 schools.

It's important to remember that if your student has particular requirements of a school, and there is a limited amount of schools that fulfill those requirements, they would typically submit a lower amount of applications than a comparative student. For an example, if your student plans on pursuing competitive athletics, and has hopes of playing in the NCAA Division I level in a particular sport, they should focus their applications on schools that offer that program. You can find more information on this on the NCAA site, and navigate your choices through Division, State and Sport.



The Limited Amount of Time Between Acceptance and Decisions

Most universities will share their decisions on the applicant's admission starting in mid March through late April. A majority of schools want the student's to answer by May 1st, leaving your student with a lot of pressure if he/she still need to choose between several acceptances. Your student is given about a month to make all of their decisions, [visit colleges](#), and figure out [financial circumstances](#).

This window normally lasts between four and six weeks and can be very strenuous, particularly if your student is provided with numerous school offers. Ensure that your student manages his/her time well and will think carefully about their decision of which school to attend.

Our Suggestions--Regardless of the Number of Colleges or Universities Your Student Applies to for Admission

We suggest you follow these guidelines, whether you apply to 1-4, 6-8 or 10-12 schools.

Suggestion 1: Identify at Least 2 Safety Schools

Your student should be given great college or university options by following our recommendations. **Long term planning and continuing discussions about your student's choice and alternatives will ensure that your student has taken into consideration several options, even if they include safety schools.**

Suggestion 2: Conduct Most of Your Research Before You Apply

Make sure your student is aware of his/her interests prior to choosing what schools they want to apply to. Our team at Success Pathway can help you choose schools that would be most suitable to your student. There are 2,500 4-year schools around the U.S. alone!

Suggestion 3: Apply Only to Colleges or Universities You Want to Attend

Your student should only submit to universities that they really want to attend. **The application method requires a lot of time, and can be very expensive.**

Suggestion 4: Prioritize or Rank the Schools You Apply to Before You Receive Acceptances

After applying to schools, continue looking into its campus and programs. **We highly suggest that you attempt to set priorities on your schools on the premise that you are going to be accepted, ultimately, making your decision easier.** Once accepted, you can calculate your [cost of attendance](#) for each university. The acceptance package will come with your financial aid package, if you applied.

Suggestion 5: Do a "Reality Check"--be Realistic About Your Chances of Admission

While achieving your objectives is always good, sometimes it can be too far of a risk. **Make sure your schools list is realistic.** If you choose to apply to selective schools, which have less than a 25% acceptance rate, and your grades and test scores are below average, the likelihood of being accepted is low.

However, if you display something exceptional on your application, you may stand a better chance at being accepted.

If you are exceptional at physics, a phenomenal athlete or committed to the community service program, you are given higher odds of admissions even if you have a lower GPA or standardized test scores.

Final Advice

As stated earlier, there is no “magic number” when it comes to applying to colleges or universities. Therefore, despite an inclination or urge, as well as the increasing use of the [Common Application](#) and [Coalition Application](#) to apply to multiple schools, especially if a family can afford to do so, this approach is “costly” all around. Ultimately, you can go [overboard](#) by applying to more than 20 or 30 colleges or universities. We simply do not recommend this approach.



Students may only apply to local, state schools because of limited information they obtain in their home countries about going to school in the U.S. On the other hand, some are completely unaware of all of the college or university options that are available to them. **We encourage you to consider state institutions, private colleges and universities, and out-of-country/state schools.** Get started today! The Success Pathway team can guide you and work closely with you and your family to achieve a positive outcome for your student’s college and university application process. **Working with Success Pathway will assist your student in identifying schools based on individual needs.**

For an additional fee, we can arrange a group campus tour or customize an [individualized campus tour](#) of schools you are interested in before you make your final decision. Contact us today at info@successpathwayconsulting.com to launch your college or university search!