

Aiming For the Most Selective Colleges?

HARVARD
UNIVERSITY



Yale University



Dartmouth



COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK



Penn
UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA



BROWN



Cornell University



PRINCETON
UNIVERSITY



Cal



USC
UNIVERSITY
OF SOUTHERN
CALIFORNIA

Ucla



Highly Selective Colleges

What is a highly selective college? Selective colleges are schools that accept 25% or fewer applicants from those who apply. Some colleges are selective because they are looking for a certain specialized type of student (Juilliard), or who pass a physical fitness assessment (West Point), or those with excellent credentials overall (Ivy League schools, Stanford or MIT).



What Should You Do if You Are Aiming for the Most Selective Colleges?

- There is no magic formula for acceptance, but you do not have to rely on luck either.
- Students need to take the most difficult classes throughout high school while earning very high grades.
- Standardized test scores are also very important; scores should be at or above the average for admitted students.
- Even at non-specialized schools (but especially at specialized schools), it is important to show excellence in one academic or extracurricular area to stand out from the crowd. Since you are competing with so many applicants, and most of them will have academic credentials that are as good as yours, you will need to find a way to demonstrate your value as a member of the college community that goes beyond grades and test scores.
- The most selective schools appreciate passion, drive, and outside-the-box thinking. If you can develop a specialization that shows them that you possess those qualities, your chances of acceptance are stronger.

The Tests

- In addition to having a VERY competitive SAT and/or ACT score (see school averages below), most highly selective schools want specific subject tests or at least two subject tests of the student's choice. (Always check the school's website for specific information).



The Interview

- Most highly selective schools will utilize local alumni to conduct interviews. These are sometimes used for admissions, but often they are informational only.
- They will be conducted individually or in groups (usually for scholarship purposes)
- Requesting an interview – there is often a box to note on the application. The interview will be scheduled after the application is submitted. Frequently check the school's website for local events; interviews maybe scheduled during this time.

Interview Tips

- **Bring specific questions.** Your interviewer will expect you to ask some questions about the school and talk about why you want to go there. Put some energy into coming up with creative questions with answers that cannot be easily found on the college's website.
- **Practice like a prizefighter** – Being interviewed is a skill, and it requires practice. Sit down with one of your parents, a teacher, a counselor, or a friend and have him or her ask you their best college interview questions. Answer them honestly and seriously. Then ask for honest feedback. You will get better with practice.
- **Prepare for common college interview questions** – Interviewers tend to ask about the same topics. If you are prepared to answer the following questions, you should be in good shape.
 1. Why do you want to attend this college/university? (Hint: Specific examples are always key! Your interviewer wants you to be as excited as they are about their college.
 2. What is your favorite subject in high school?
 3. What do you want to study in college?
 4. What do you enjoy doing when you are not in class?
 5. What are three interesting things about you that I would not know from your application?
 6. What is an example of an obstacle, a failure, or a mistake that you learned from?
- **Be yourself** – Remember, the key to being admitted (and being happy there) is finding your best-fit school. You want to be yourself so that the person interviewing you can discern what you would add to the campus community.
- **.....but be your best self** – You have many sides, so showcase the side of yourself that is professional, mature and poised. Smile, and remember your interviewer wants the interview to go well too! Dress appropriately – business casual is a good rule of thumb.
- **Stop worrying about the clock** – Most interviews run about 30 minutes. Students are sometimes told that the sign of a good interview is a long one. But on – campus interviews are usually scheduled back-to-back, and off-campus interviews are



performed by alumni who are working professionals – so your interviewer is likely on a tight schedule.

- ***Be thankful*** – Send a thank you note. If there is something about the interview that was helpful to you, let the interviewer know. If you connected with your interviewer over a book, common experience, or a band you both are into, then mention it! Otherwise, express your continued interest in the school and thank the interviewer for taking the time to meet with you.

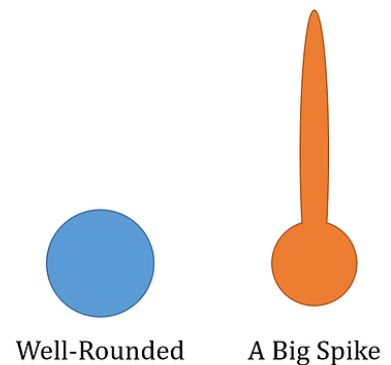
The X Factor

- When two applicants appear similar on paper, the one who has made an effort to be known has the advantage over the other.
- Colleges want students who are genuinely interested in attending, not ones that are just applying randomly. This has become an important variable.
- They also want students who are going to contribute positively to their communities while in college and will help others do the same.
- Remember – the best predictor of future achievement is past achievement. The point of your application is to convince the school that, based on your achievements so far, you are going to continue succeeding and achieving great things.



Create a Big Spike Rather Than a Circle

- A spike is what sets you apart from all of the other applicants. Ideally, this spike is what makes you world class and makes colleges think you are going to accomplish great things.
- A spike can come in many forms, depending on your interests. If you love science, consider working with a local college on a research project. If you love computers, consider creating a successful app. If you are a writer, consider writing a book. The idea behind this is it is better to do one thing really, really well, rather than several things just mediocre. Remember, highly selective colleges are looking for those world changers. If they only accept 5% of ALL of the applications they receive, mediocrity will most likely not be enough.
- Your application's job is to sell your big spike.



Essays Might Be the Most Important Part of Your Application - Use the essay section of your application to creatively portray yourself rather than listing accomplishments. Something as mundane as a trip to Costco can get you into 5 Ivys and Stanford as it did for Brittany Stinson. Sharing a very personal event can get you into 7 Ivys like it did for Luke Kenworthy. (copies of these essays are included at the end of this packet). Business Insider published their Common App essays in 2016 and 2017. A great idea is to spend time watching YouTube vidoes, vlogs, and reading college admissions blogs. Colleges have started being more transparent about their admissions process; take advantage of this new found transparency.

Class of 2024 Ivy League Acceptance Rates

Ivy League Colleges	Overall Accept. Rate	Regular Decision Accept. Rate	Regular Decision Apps Accepted	Regular Decision Apps Received	Early Decision / Action Accept. Rate	% of Class Filled by Early Apps	Early Decision / Action Apps Rcvd	Early Decision / Action Apps Accepted	Expected Number of Students to Enroll	Total Apps Received	Total Apps Accepted
Brown	6.9%	5.4%	1,733	32,232	17.5%	48.0%	4,562	800	1,665	36,794	2,533
Columbia	6.1%	5.1%	1,815	35,766	15.1%	46.8%	4,318	650	1,390	40,084	2,465
Cornell	10.7%	8.7%	3,920	44,870	24.0%	49.0%	6,630	1,594	3,296	51,500	5,514
Dartmouth	8.8%	6.9%	1,334	19,325	26.4%	47.6%	2,069	547	1,150	21,394	1,881
Harvard	4.9%	3.2%	1,085	33,824	13.9%	n/a*	6,424	895	1,665	40,248	1,970
Penn	8.1%	6.0%	2,135	35,752	19.7%	52.9%	6,453	1,269	2,400	42,205	3,404
Princeton	5.6%	3.7%	1,032	27,838	15.8%	n/a*	4,998	791	1,308	32,836	1,823
Yale	6.5%	5.1%	1,508	29,443	13.8%	n/a*	5,777	796	1,554	35,220	2,304

* n/a = not applicable since an Early Action policy was in place

The graph below of the 2024 Ivy League admissions statistics shows a comparison between the Early Decision / Early Action acceptance rates and the Regular Decision acceptance rates:

Reported by <https://www.ivycoach.com/2024-ivy-league-admissions-statistics/>

Georgia Tech Admissions Statistics

2021 Admissions Statistics

- 45,350 applications
- Overall admit rate: 18%
- Georgia admit rate: 32%
- Test Score Optional: 37% of applicants, 21% of admitted students

- 8,500 offered [Transfer Pathway Programs](#)
- 42% Female and 58% Male

Georgia Tech Admissions Factors

- Academic Preparation
- Standardized Testing
- Contribution to Community
- Personal Essays
- Recommendations
- Interview – only for non-native English speakers
- Major Selection
- Intuitional Fit – You will hear the Ga Tech admissions counselors talk a lot about this.



“If you are applying to Georgia Tech, you will be reviewed through a holistic admission process where we consider every single element of your application and weigh that in comparison not only with the applicant pool, but also with institutional priorities.

This type of evaluation means that every piece of your application is important – course rigor, GPA, test scores, contribution to your community and essays. We have outlined what we look for in each portion of the application, but it is important to remember that all of these factors, not one, help us determine not only if you are an excellent student, but whether or not you would be an excellent fit here at Georgia Tech.

Holistic admission is utilized to ensure enrollment of a first-year class who will be diverse, innovative thinkers and problem solvers. A diverse class of students from many backgrounds has proven to be fertile soil for creativity. We also want a class who studies a variety of disciplines, so the major you put on your application and evidence of your interest in this major is an indicator of how you would fit in the upcoming class. These are examples of institutional priorities, and how factors outside of your GPA and test scores will affect your admission decision.”

- **See their website for more information about each of these categories**

Follow [The College Admission Brief Podcast](#) hosted by Georgia Tech

University of Georgia Admissions Statistics

2021 Admissions Statistics

- 39,400 + Applications
- 15,350 were admitted
- More than 40% were admitted without a test score
- Top intended majors for first year students (class of 2024)
 - BS Biology
 - BS Psychology
 - BBA Finance
 - BS Computer Science

