

How to Build a Well-Balanced College List

- Your college list should include the following:
 1. **Reach School**- (1-2) Colleges you think may be more difficult to be admitted.
 2. **Good Match**- (3-4) Colleges you feel you have a very good chance of getting admitted.
 3. **Safety**- (2-3) Colleges you are almost certain you will be admitted.
- Determining if a school is a Reach, Good Match or Safety school, consider 3 main factors:
 1. The school's general acceptance rate
 2. Average weighted GPA for last year's incoming freshman
 3. Average SAT/ACT scores for last year's incoming freshman

Explore these websites to search a school's Freshman Admission Profile. This will generate the average GPA & test scores of admitted students. Ask yourself, "Do I look like the typical student this college accepts?" Use this information to guide you throughout the school year. Set goals to improve your GPA by attending tutoring. Read, read, read to improve your PSAT/SAT score.

www.collegedata.com

www.californiacolleges.edu

www.cappex.com

www.bigfuture.collegeboard.org

- A School may be a good match but a poor fit. Each college on your list should meet these criteria:
 - Good Academic Fit
 - Good Financial Fit
 - Good Social Fit
- 1. **Academic Fit**- Look for colleges that admit students who match your GPA, standardized test scores, and academic & career goals. Consider the average class size, student-to-teacher ratios and whether classes are taught mainly by full-time professors, part-time, or graduate assistants. Do you learn better through discussions or through hands-on activity? Are programs impacted? Do they offer your major?
- 2. **Financial Fit**- College is usually more affordable than you think. Here are a few things to consider:
 - Do you have the facts about what colleges will cost? Students don't usually pay the published price because of financial aid. Begin researching FAFSA (free money) early to see what resources are available to you <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/fafsa> or Cal Grant <https://www.csac.ca.gov/>

- ALL students should apply for aid, whether or not you think you will qualify. Most students get financial help from the government or the college itself.
 - Colleges will offer merit scholarships based on GPA & test scores.
 - Research the scholarship list (handout posted on College Information Board & our website). <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/scholarship-search> is a great place to start! Most require an application and/or essay.
3. **Social Fit-** Look for colleges that match your unique personality and long-term goals. Consider these factors:
- Campus Life-what do you want your college experience to be like outside of the classroom? What extracurricular activities, social life, school spirit traditions and housing options does the college offer?
 - Distance from Home- Decide how far from home you want your college experience to take you.
 - Location-This will be your home for 4 years! Consider if your college is in a small town or big town. Area and climate (is it near the beach or in a rainy city?) What restaurants & stores do you have access to you? Are they walking distance from your dorm/apartment?
 - Size-What is the student population? This will determine class size, student parking, and available resources to you. Your experience will be vastly different at a small liberal arts college VS. a state university
 - Diversity- Do you want a college where you'll be surrounded by students similar to yourself, or one where you'll meet people from a variety of backgrounds?