

what do colleges look for in an applicant?

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When deciding which applicants to admit to their college, admissions officers look at many different factors. Read on to see if you are the kind of applicant they want.

Challenging Schedule

One of the main factors that college admissions officers look for is a [rigorous class schedule](#). Colleges want students who are willing to challenge themselves. For most colleges, this is even better than having the best grades. If an admissions officer is deciding between two applicants, where one student has a 4.0 and takes standard courses and the other applicant has a B average but takes advanced courses, the admissions officer will usually pick the B average student. If your current schedule isn't that rigorous, talk to your school counselor about taking more advanced courses in the future.

Grades

While a challenging schedule may hold a little more precedence, grades are still very important to colleges. Many colleges have a minimum GPA requirement to apply. Therefore, it is crucial that you [keep your grades up](#) throughout your entire high school career. If you think that it's okay to slack off a little bit during your senior year, think again. Many colleges have been known to revoke their offers of admission to students who suffer from [senioritis](#).

Standardized Test Scores

Colleges do take your admissions test scores into consideration. If you are aiming for a scholarship, your test scores need to be at or above the high end range for the college in which you are applying. If your test scores are near the median range, then your class schedule and grades will be the main deciding factors for admission. If your test scores are low, an admissions counselor may go to bat for you if your grades and schedule are outstanding. Read [The Low-Down on College Admissions Tests](#) for tips on taking the SAT and ACT.

Extracurricular Activities

Being involved in [extracurricular activities](#) shows admissions officers that you are a well-rounded student and that you are good with time management skills. Colleges want students who are going to be involved with activities on their campus. Keep in mind, however, that you should not join a bunch of activities just to fill up your high school resume. Admissions officers are looking for quality over quantity. Pick a few activities that really interest you and become fully involved in them. It looks better on [your high school resume](#) when you can say you organized a fundraiser for the science club, rather than just being a member of the club.

Application Essay

The college application essay allows you to show your uniqueness to admissions officers. Counselors look for application essays that are honest and provide supplemental information. Do not restate the information found on your transcript and application. Instead, write about your desires, your goals, special events in your life, etc. Check out [these tips for writing your college admissions essay](#).

Letters of Recommendation

Admissions officers rely on letters of recommendation to let them know how others view you. Be sure to pick your recommenders wisely. If your recommender doesn't know you that well, it will show through his letter. Follow [these tips](#) for getting the best letters of recommendation for college admission.

Other Factors

Because colleges want a diverse student body, admissions officers may consider other aspects when determining eligibility for admission. Check out some of the [other factors](#) colleges consider during the admissions process.

Keep in mind that colleges really want well-rounded students, so having a good mixture of the above-mentioned factors will help you in the admissions process. Good luck!

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