

Starting Point!

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Welcome to your journey to college. Whether you have four years or six months to plan for college, the list of items to consider is the same. Where do you want to go? What will you study? How will you pay for it? Do your grades and test scores reflect your best self? With the TRACK IT! College Planning Curriculum, you will have a chance to answer those questions and to make purposeful choices and informed decisions.

As you move through the TRACK IT! units, remember to be honest with yourself. Take time to discover your academic, creative, social, athletic, and emotional strengths. Learn the attributes that you might need to improve upon to meet your goals. This is a wonderful opportunity to think about your future and what you would like it to be.

This first unit is your introduction to the college admissions process. You will learn all about the unique college admissions vocabulary. You will discover timelines for each year of high school that can help remind you of the most important things to do during that year. You will learn about the organizational tools you can use to help keep your data in order and ready to use when the time comes to complete your applications.

Finally, you will learn that there is a lot to learn. As you begin the process of understanding the college admission journey, you will encounter much information that is inaccurate and sometimes confusing. When you hear something that doesn't sound quite right, make certain you ask an adult or counselor who is familiar with the process to validate the information. For now, let's start by addressing some of the most common myths surrounding college admissions.

Discover your future – with 12 comprehensive units:

Introduction
Self Assessment
Academic Planning
College Applications

College Search
Personal Statement Essays
Financial Aid
Standardized Testing

Scholarships
Communications
Special Needs
Visual & Performing Arts

IT'S NOT WHERE
YOU GO TO
COLLEGE THAT
COUNTS, IT'S
WHAT YOU DO
WHEN YOU GET
THERE!

THE MAJORITY
OF COLLEGES
ACCEPT OVER
HALF OF THOSE
WHO APPLY!

Five Common Myths in College Admissions

Myth #1: Some secret strategy can get me admitted to college.

Sounds wonderful, right? Unfortunately, it's just not true. The very best ways to increase your odds of being admitted are to work hard in your classes, prepare for your standardized tests, and have a purposeful high school experience. Seek out extracurricular activities that demonstrate your interests and strengths, not just those that add lines to your résumé. Cultivate relationships with teachers and administrators who can help highlight your assets in letters of recommendations instead of trying to find some "famous" person that doesn't even know you to write those same letters.

Myth #2: Relying on magazine lists of "Best Colleges" is the best way to determine whether a college is right for me.

Everyone loves lists; the "Top Ten Colleges," the "Top Five Drama Programs," the "Top Eight Engineering Universities." You name it — there are lists for everything. It's too bad there isn't a published list that actually makes sense — the "Top Ten Colleges Best for You!" Those other lists are often based on data and information that doesn't even relate to students' concerns. The best way to determine if a college is right for you is to research it by visiting the campus in person (or online), talking to graduates and current students, and evaluating what you are looking for in the college experience.

Myth #3: The best time to visit a college is after you have been admitted.

Actually setting foot on a campus and spending time exploring the school is one of the best ways to see if it is a good match for you. Obviously, it's not always practical to visit every school on your list, but you should take any opportunity to visit a campus. Visiting can validate your feelings about a school or rule it out, which can save time and money during the application process. Lastly, visiting campuses early also allows you to fine tune your Key College Criteria (which you'll learn more about in Unit 5.)

Myth #4: If you don't have a perfect GPA, you'll never get accepted to a "good" college.

Of course there are well-known colleges, but there are also prestigious academic programs within less-known universities. Be sure to explore potential majors and the corresponding college programs. And remember that most colleges admit over half of their applicants. The average acceptance rate for all four-year colleges in the U.S. is 66.1 percent (NACAC 2018), and there are amazing success stories coming out of all types of colleges, regardless of rankings.

Myth #5: Colleges are looking for well-rounded students.

You've probably heard this at least once — and once upon a time, it was true. Over time, most colleges came to realize that students who brought depth and knowledge in specific areas (instead of a little bit of knowledge in many areas) helped create a well-rounded student body. How exciting for a campus! Think of a beautiful tapestry; Imagine each colored thread representing a specific interest and strength of a single student. Stitch together a bunch of differently colored threads, and you create the fabric of the campus community. Everyone has at least one emerging interest — learn to develop yours into a passion and add to the tapestry.