

Visual & Performing Arts:

Put your talent front and center!

**THE BIGGEST
MISTAKE VPA
STUDENTS MAKE
IS TO START
PLANNING FOR
COLLEGE TOO
LATE.**

**BEGIN
GATHERING
EXAMPLES OF
YOUR BEST
WORK AS SOON
AS YOU CAN.**

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The Visual and Performing Arts (VPA) Student: Whether your talent is in the arts, music, dance, drama, or computer animation, you will have additional considerations when deciding on your future college path. Talented students need to consider what kind of college will best suit their needs, as well as navigate the complex application process. With a little advance planning and research, you will find yourself attending the perfect college. Let's get started:

Art Schools, Conservatories, and Art Majors, Oh My!

The first decision you need to consider is what type of college experience you are looking for and how serious you are about pursuing a career in the arts. If you have a passion for drama or playing the clarinet, for example, but only want to continue acting or playing the clarinet for personal reasons, you might consider going to a university that offers you the opportunity to participate in art classes while majoring in another field. If your dream is to perform in a professional orchestra or land a role on Broadway, you might consider a more art-intensive program that allows you to focus specifically on developing your craft. Here are some examples:

- Universities with art and music departments: Offer students an option to major or minor in their chosen art. You might consider a major in a subject other than art and join a club band or theater group.
- Conservatories: Provide advanced studies in the fine arts. You likely won't find business or psychology courses here.
- Art and design institutes: Focus primarily on visual arts such as painting, drawing, photography, sculpting, and/or computer graphics.

You should also research the facilities and faculty at each school. Find out about availability of space, opportunities for related internships, study abroad programs, and local venues or galleries to showcase your work.

What kind of degree should I pursue?

Just as you need to choose the type of school you will attend, you should also consider the type of degree. If you are looking for a more general degree in the arts, then you should seek out Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degrees in art, music or theater. If you want more of an immersion-type of degree, you should look for Bachelor of Fine Arts (B.F.A.) or Bachelor of Music (B.M.) degrees. These programs are more intense and require added dedication.

CONSIDER THE LOCATION OF THE VPA PROGRAM. DOES THE LOCAL AREA OFFER OPPORTUNITIES TO SHOWCASE YOUR TALENTS?

MEET WITH THE VPA ADMISSIONS OFFICE IN ADVANCE TO GET FEEDBACK ON YOUR SKILLS.

UNDERSTAND THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE PROGRAM:

THEORY VERSUS PERFORMANCE?

CLASSICAL VERSUS MODERN?

COMPETITIVE VERSUS LAID-BACK?

The VPA Portfolio or Audition: What's the Big Deal?

Once you have decided on the colleges and programs you wish to apply to, you should research to learn about the application requirements. Some colleges will admit you to a visual and performing art major without presenting proof of your abilities. Others will require you to demonstrate your skills in the form of a portfolio or audition either at the time of initial application or with final acceptance to the department later.

What are VPA departments looking for?

Every applicant to a VPA program is likely to wonder about this question. Whether you are putting together a portfolio of artwork or performing a piece of music, you can expect a few things:

- Colleges want to see your current technical ability and range to help determine your potential in their program.
- Fine art programs want to see your personal style and techniques.
- VPA admissions officers are also looking at your grades in academic classes throughout high school. With a few exceptions, most college VPA programs are looking for students with a strong academic record, as well as strength in the arts.

How do I prepare for a portfolio or audition?

The very first thing you, as an aspiring VPA student, need to do is to read through all requirements and deadlines for each college — carefully! There are usually very clear, strict guidelines that you must follow. Use the VPA Worksheet in this unit to keep track of these different requirements. Next, you should begin collecting art work, computer graphics, or musical pieces you can include in a portfolio. Use the chart below to consider some of the attributes of the portfolio or audition you should keep in mind:

PORTFOLIO	AUDITION
Ask teachers for a solid critique of your work. Consider attending one of the National Portfolio Days for additional feedback.	Ask high school music or theater director for advice on your selections. Request honest feedback on your strengths and weaknesses.
Include recent, original work in the portfolio.	Choose pieces that you are comfortable performing that spotlight your strengths.
Consider creating a theme to pull together all pieces of work.	Pick a few different, contrasting pieces to demonstrate your range.
Give yourself ample time to complete your portfolio. Photographing work and uploading can be time-intensive.	If you are performing sight-read music, read through the entire piece carefully before proceeding.
Consider finding someone who understands lighting to help with photographing your art work.	Memorize the pieces you are performing.
Include your name, date and any other required info on each piece of your portfolio.	Verify if you need to bring anything of your own: accompanist, drum sticks, cables, sheet music copies, etc.