COLLEGE COACH consultants

September 2026

Seniors—
Meet with college reps.
Finalize college list: work on applications & essays.
Request recommendation letters from teachers and counselors.
Review your transcript for accuracy.
Check your school's website for fall college rep visits to your area.

Juniors—
Register for the [SAT](#) or [ACT](#)

Meet with college reps.
[NACAC College Fairs](#)

10th & 11th Graders—
Sign up for the **PSAT** at your high school.

October 2026

Seniors—
Continue to meet with college reps.
Complete Early Decision/Early Action/Rolling Applications.
Complete CSS Profile if required by colleges
Complete the FAFSA.

Admission Blunders to Avoid

College admissions can feel confusing, stressful, and complicated at times, but for most students, things ultimately work out well. However, your journey to college will likely go more smoothly if you avoid these seven common mistakes.

Lying on your college applications. When you're worried about getting into college, it can sometimes be tempting to stretch the truth on your applications. Maybe add a few extracurriculars that you haven't really actively participated in, or exaggerate a bit in your essay to make it sound like you've faced more challenges or accomplished more than you have. Or, as one student did, go even further and create a false homeschool transcript to overcome your poor academic history.

There is no bigger mistake you can make than to lie, stretch the truth, or exaggerate on your college applications. Admission officers are masters at spotting half-truths and things that don't add up on applications. And all colleges reserve the right to rescind admission offers and expel enrolled students when lies are discovered. *Don't risk it.* Be absolutely honest in all of your college application materials.

Forgetting to build a safety net into your college list. Many students (and parents) overestimate their (or their child's) chances of being admitted to a particular school or group of colleges. The truth is that even superstar applicants can be rejected, especially at highly competitive schools. So, every college list needs a safety net: a school or two that you love just as much as the others on your list but where your chances of being admitted are excellent. At the same time, don't let fear stop you from applying to schools with lower acceptance rates *if your grades and test scores are in the ballpark*. The only sure way to *not* get in is to not apply in the first place. If you have a good safety net built into your list, taking a chance on some more selective schools is fine.

Failing to do your own homework on every college you apply to. Solicitations from colleges offering "free," "easy," or "priority" applications might seem attractive, but there is no sense applying to any college if you haven't done at least some basic research on your own to see if it is a good fit. For every college that makes your final list, you should at least be aware of their academic programs, likely net price, and distinctive characteristics. Don't waste your time applying to colleges that you don't know anything about. By the same token, even if someone tells you it's a good school, do your own research and make your own determination. After all, you're the person who will be spending the next four years of your life attending college.

Waiting until the last minute. While filling out college applications isn't exactly as difficult as conducting neurosurgery, a good, complete application does take time and thought. It is recommended to finish all essays and submit applications at least 1-2 weeks ahead of the college's deadline. Strong essays also require thought, editing, and proofreading. So, give yourself more time than you think you need, and get down to work as early as possible.

Making your recommendation writers' jobs tougher. Teachers and counselors are busy people, and often have dozens, if not more, letters of recommendation (LORs) to write in the fall. If they agree to write a letter for you, they want to do the best job they can. And students can help make this task easier for their teachers. When asking for a recommendation, ask

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Career Paths for Biology Majors

- Biologist
- Biomedical engineer
- Botanist
- Community health worker
- Dentist or Doctor
- Epidemiologist
- Environmental conservationist/activist
- Genetic counselor
- Hydrologist
- Marine biologist
- Medical manager
- Medical researcher
- Microbiologist
- Nurse
- Pharmacist
- Pharmacologist
- Physician
- Physician assistant
- Science writer
- Researcher
- Veterinarian
- Zoologist

Focus on Majors: Biology

If you are fascinated by the nature of living things, enjoy conducting experiments, and like math and science, a major in biology may be right for you. As a biology major, you will study the beginnings of both plant and animal life forms and analyze their structures, functions, and traits. The study of biology has many areas of specialization, allowing students multiple career paths in a wide variety of fields after completing the major.

The biology major program consists of both lab-based and lecture-based courses. Students will typically spend the first two years forming a solid knowledge base in chemistry, biology, and calculus. They will often have to take multiple introductory-level courses in topics such as ecology, evolution, biostatistics, genetics, biochemistry, human anatomy, and physiology.

There will be a strong hands-on component to the major. Students will be required to conduct both individual and group research and lab projects throughout the course of the major. This will give them hands-on experience designing, conducting, analyzing, and communicating the results of experiments. They will learn necessary collaboration skills as well as hone their abilities to accurately collect data, take detailed notes, analyze results, and participate in the scientific field.

As students progress, they will focus their courses under a concentration, which may include biotechnology, microbiology, bioinformatics, genetics, human biology, or molecular biology. Concentrations offered vary depending on the college program.

Biology majors have many choices upon graduation. They may choose to continue their studies and obtain a graduate degree. This would be necessary for the student who wishes to become a professor or specialize in a field such as epidemiology.

Students who wish to become doctors, nurses, veterinarians, or other professionals in the medical field will need to attend a post-graduate program. Biology is a common preparatory major for medical school, as it provides students with a strong knowledge base and many skills required in the field.

Students may also choose to become high school or middle school educators, teaching biology or marine biology. If majors want to educate the public but do not want to work as a teacher in schools, they may choose to become health educators or community health workers.

For graduates who are skilled in writing, there is demand for science journalists either at science magazines, newspapers, and journals or in the science section of general news.

Students interested in the environment may find jobs as forest rangers, zoo workers, or botanists. They may become environmental scientists or researchers focused on the environment. They may also find jobs at nonprofit organizations or in government agencies interested in environmental protection and management.

Those who enjoy lab work may become biological technicians who aid in laboratory research in universities and research organizations.

Others who enjoy designing products may enter the field of biotechnology. Biotechnologists design and improve existing technology in a vast array of fields. In medicine, they may design new medicinal treatments such as protein drugs. They may also work in agriculture to improve the production, quality, or preservation of various agricultural commodities, or in cosmetics, designing new makeup or skincare products.

Finally, if students are interested in law, they can apply their major in a few different ways. They may become medical malpractice lawyers, using their understanding to determine whether doctors acted ethically, responsibly, and competently. They may also become lawyers fighting in support of environmental policies, using their knowledge of ecosystems.

Financial Matters: Using the Net Price Calculator

For most families, the sticker price on a college's website has almost nothing to do with what you'll actually pay. That's where two tools come in: the Cost of Attendance (COA) and the Net Price Calculator (NPC). Understanding both can turn a huge, scary number into a manageable plan.

Every college publishes a COA, which includes tuition and fees, room and board, books and supplies, transportation, and personal expenses. This is the federally mandated "sticker price," meant to represent the full annual cost of attending. It's tempting to fixate on tuition alone, but COA is what financial aid offices use to calculate eligibility, making it the right starting point for any comparison. COA varies by residency and living arrangement, so check that you're looking at the version matching your student's situation. And COA is a ceiling, not a prediction; almost no family pays the full amount.

That said, some families will pay close to the full fee, particularly those applying mainly to schools that don't offer merit aid and are less likely to qualify for need-based support; for them, COA is less a ceiling than a real planning number.

This is where the Net Price Calculator comes in. Federal law requires every college to post an NPC on its website, and the tool estimates what your family will actually pay after grants and scholarships are subtracted from COA; this is the "net price." You'll enter basic information about income, assets, and household size, and the calculator returns a personalized estimate. These calculators aren't always easy to find; they're sometimes tucked into a financial aid subpage rather than linked from the homepage, so if you don't spot it right away, try typing "net price calculator" into the college's own website search bar. Remember, too, that results are estimates, not offers, based on prior-year aid patterns, so your actual award letter may differ.

One thing to keep front of mind: many NPCs are built around need-based aid formulas and don't fully capture merit scholarships. If a school on your student's list is known for offering merit aid, don't cross it off based on a high net price estimate alone; a student with strong grades and test scores may end up paying considerably less once merit awards are factored in. Comparing several schools' NPC results side by side early on is one of the most useful exercises you can do, and it often reshuffles a "reach versus affordable" list in your favor.

One more detail worth knowing: by law, you are not required to provide personally identifying contact information to use a net price calculator; it can be completed anonymously. Some calculators, including tools hosted through the College Board, let you save results to an account or email them to a counselor, but that's optional. If a form asks for a name or email before showing results, check whether it's required or can be skipped, since entering it can route you into a college's recruitment pipeline earlier than you might want.

Run the NPC for every school on your student's list, ideally before applications go in, so cost becomes part of the decision-making process rather than a surprise in April. Used well, COA and NPC together turn "How much does college cost?" into the far more useful question: "What will this college cost us?"

Admissions Blunders to Avoid (continued from page 1)

the person who will be writing it what additional information about you might be helpful and then provide it in a timely manner. Be clear about your application deadlines and what the recommendation writers need to do to submit their recommendations. Politely check in with your chosen teachers and counselor to see if any questions or problems have cropped up and, if they have, help your recommenders get answers. The easier you make the process for the people writing your LORs, the more time they'll have to craft letters that sing your praises to admissions!

Relying on the advice of strangers on the internet. The internet is an invaluable tool for gathering information about colleges, but not all internet resources are created equal. Social media sites and college discussion forums, in particular, often have inaccurate information. Strangers online don't know you, haven't seen your transcript, and often know less about admissions than they claim.

A better use of social media: follow a college's official admissions or department Instagram accounts to see what the school itself considers worth showcasing. When in doubt, it's always wiser to trust your independent educational consultant and your school counselor than to trust a stranger's guess about your chances. This goes for both students and parents.

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How Much to Disclose

Students often worry about calling attention to anything negative on a college application, but just because you ignore something doesn't mean admissions officers won't notice it. Admissions officers aren't looking for a diagnosis or a confession; they're looking for context that helps them understand the story your transcript is telling.

Take a rough patch in a single class. If you bombed a midterm but sought out extra help and pulled your grade from a D to a C by year's end, the final grade alone doesn't show what you actually learned or how hard you worked to turn it around. A brief, factual mention of the struggle and the effort behind the recovery gives the reader a fuller picture than the grade alone.

The same logic applies to chronic health issues, ADHD, and learning differences. A student diagnosed with a reading disorder in ninth grade, who then received accommodations and support and saw grades climb from Bs to As, has a story that's invisible unless it's explained. So does a student whose learning difference earned them a waiver from their school's foreign language requirement, since without context that gap can look like an unexplained hole in a transcript. In each case, the point isn't the diagnosis; it's the strategies and skills the student built and now carries into college.

There are some things you must disclose. Most college applications ask if you have been found responsible for a disciplinary violation in high school or convicted of a crime, and you are required to answer those questions. You will then need to write an explanation of what happened and what you learned from the experience. If you disclose something that could be damaging to your application, report the information in a straightforward way, without trying to make excuses. Then own it: discuss how you've grown as a result of the experience, so the reader comes away with an appreciation for your strengths as well as your challenges.

It's also worth remembering that not everything needs to be shared. A breakup or a rough patch unrelated to your academic record generally doesn't belong in an application unless it directly explains something the reader would otherwise misread. A past health issue, on the other hand, can be worth mentioning whether or not it affected your grades, since either version of that story says something real about who you are.

Whatever you're weighing, talk it through with your counselor and your family. Look at the specific grade, score, or record that needs context, then decide together whether disclosing helps the reader understand you better. If it does, say it plainly and let the growth speak for itself.