

## Parent Tips: DO's and DON'Ts of Helping Your Child Apply for College

The college application process can feel daunting to anyone, never mind sixteen- or seventeen-year-olds trying to balance their social lives, romance lives, and . . . oh yeah, high school grades. That's why it's important that you, their parent, step in and partner with them through this life-changing process.

Here is a short list of Do's and Don'ts that you, the parent of a college-bound high school student, can follow to provide the support your student needs while ensuring that they stay in the driver's seat.

**DO set up a separate email account.** You will be bombarded with admissions emails. Do yourself and your student a favor and don't share your daily email box with this influx of communications. This can be a stress reducer too, allowing you and your student to compartmentalize the admissions process to a time and place that works.

**But DON'T put it in your name.** This is a great time to help your student be more responsible and autonomous. The email should be set up in his/her name. This also shows prospective colleges that your student is capable and independent.

**DO maintain a timeline.** Applications deadlines are numerous and can sneak up without warning if you're not careful. Plus, if your child wants to engage in activities such as college fairs, campus visits, or admissions interviews, the timing of these needs to be taken into consideration, as well. Therefore, developing a schedule to help your child stay on track can be immensely helpful.

**But DON'T nag.** If your child procrastinates or misses a deadline, they need to handle the consequences. After all, this is what will happen in real life; they might as well start learning now!

**DO your homework.** No matter how vividly you may remember your own college admissions process, times have changed. In order to be a useful resource and helping hand to your child, you need to research the latest processes and expectations in college admissions. (Including financial aid!)

**But DON'T do everything for your child.** This is their future at stake, not yours, so be sure to heed the boundary between helping and "taking over" the college application process.

**DO discuss finances.** And do this as frankly and early as possible. This way, your child knows what is realistic up front and won't waste any time or energy researching colleges that, ultimately, they won't be able to attend.

**But DON'T let sticker price intimidate them.** Believe it or not, financial aid might actually make a school with a higher sticker price *less* expensive than a competitor. Be realistic, but don't discourage your student before you've done your own homework and have a sense of what is actually possible.

**DO make time for campus visits.** Nothing can give a student the feeling of being "at home" (or out of place) like an in-person visit to a school. Plus, these visits present valuable opportunities to learn more about the school beyond a static website or slow email correspondence. Therefore, encourage your child to visit at least a few campuses of schools they are considering, and arrange your schedule so that you can help make the visits happen.

**But DON'T force your child to do anything they don't want to do.** If the impetus is not coming from them, they probably won't get the same level of benefit out of the activity, whether it's a campus visit, admissions interview, or applying to a school at all. Be supportive, be encouraging, but at the end of the day, let your child steer the process in whatever direction they decide is best.

Finally, **DO let your child make their own decisions.** Choosing a college is one of the first opportunities your child has to make adult choices, and they must live with the consequences of their choice. Therefore, step back and make sure the choice is theirs.