

Applying to College: Your Counselor's Role

When it's time to fill out college applications, your school counselor plays a central part. You're the one in charge, though. It's up to you to ask your counselor for whatever you need. Help your counselor help you.

What Your Counselor Can Help You Do

Your counselor sends important parts of your application—such as your high school transcript—to colleges. That's not the only role your counselor plays in the college application process. Here's all the things your counselor can help you do:

Find Colleges

Your counselor can help you create a list of colleges to research that's based on your interests and on the characteristics of each college. When it comes time to narrow down your list, your counselor can help you categorize schools into reach, match, and safety colleges.

Understand Requirements

Because colleges have different application requirements, your counselor can tell you what each college's requirements are. Most colleges require an essay. Many ask applicants to send scores from an admission test, such as the SAT® or ACT®. There are many test-optional schools that use these scores for scholarship consideration and course placement. Your counselor can also help you register for these admission tests.

Send Your Transcript

Your counselor can guide you through your school's process for sending your transcript to the colleges you are applying to. In many cases, the counselor will send it for you. In some cases, your school may have other school officials who will send your transcripts. Check with your counselor to find out the process at your school.

Get Recommendations

Your counselor may be asked for a recommendation letter from colleges you're applying to. Even if not directly asked for a recommendation by colleges, your counselor can be your best bet, as long as they know you well enough to speak about your strengths and character.

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR TIME WITH YOUR COUNSELOR

College application season is an especially busy time for high school counselors. Help your counselor help you by staying on top of the application process. Here's how:

Be early. If you start researching colleges, collecting ideas for application essays, and making requests for recommendation letters well ahead of time, you'll make it easier for your counselor to give you timely answers when you need them.

Be organized. Figure out your own system for keeping track of application components and deadlines.

Be responsible. Your counselor can assist you in many ways, but this is your project and your responsibility. It's up to you to ask your counselor for what you need. Schedule appointments when you need to talk.

Be prepared. When you do meet with your counselor, have a list of questions ready. Know what you want to discuss.