

written by Michael Tao

Overview: Here is a quick checklist with suggestions for students who are applying to colleges and universities. This is an important guideline on how to effectively prepare your application.

Checklist before Fall of Senior Year

1. **Transcripts.** Make sure to have all your transcripts (including classes take at other institutions such as Ohlone College) ready
 - a. High-school transcript: _____
2. **SATs.** State schools only require SAT I. Others usually require SAT I, plus 2 subject tests
 - a. SAT I
 - b. SAT II : Subject _____
 - c. SAT II : Subject _____
3. **Extra-curricular log.** It is a good idea to keep track of what you've done. Take note of awards, recognitions, and officer-positions. Here is an example of the format you can use in your log:
 - a. Extra-curricular: _____
Date: _____ to _____
Recognitions: _____
Summary of tasks/involvement: _____
4. **Prepare your applications early.** Make sure to start during the summer before Senior Year. This is absolutely crucial because personal statement take a while to polish. Always have others read your statements before you submit. Here are some example questions/fill-ins to ask yourself:
 - a. What this essay tells the reader about myself: _____, _____, _____, _____
(note: if you have too many or too little- you are in trouble)
 - b. Are the ideas clear to someone who doesn't know me?
 - c. If I were to compare this essay with other students', does my personal statement stand out?
 - d. Am I using effective language? (note: Using words such as "I think," "will," "might," "may," and other words that demonstrate being unsure are usually not desirable)
5. **Financial aid.** College does not come cheap, but cost does not have to be a deciding factor on where you choose to study. Look out early for scholarships and loans. There are plenty out there. Some useful sources are
 - a. **Complete your FAFSA:** <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov>

- b. **Google search:** <http://www.college-scholarships.com>
- c. **Plan finances out with your parents**
- d. **Find waivers for application fees**

FAQs:

How important are extra-curricular activities? How do I present them?

The key here is passion. What comes after passion? Consistency, leadership, commitment, and involvement are just some of a few elements. Therefore, these aspects are important because it tells the admission officers what your interests are and if your motivation is fit for the college.

Laundry lists usually do not work. Again, having 2-3 or even 1 activity that you are very passionate about is much better than listing 6 that you sat in the first meetings of.

To present them, make sure to highlight accomplishments. “I attended all meetings” versus “I contributed and organized multiple meetings” makes a huge difference.

Remember, though, that SATs and GPAs are first priority in applications.

How important are the SATs?

This is dependent on the school you are applying to. For most colleges, SATs and GPAs are weighted similarly if not equally. They represent the most important aspects of your application. The reason for this is that GPAs reflect your performance over four years, while the SATs are standardized and neutralizes the bias introduced in GPAs.

How do they evaluate my application?

Most private schools, UCLA, and Berkeley look through your whole application and see if you are the right fit. Other schools such as UCSD and UC Davis use a point system, which your admission solely depends on a point system threshold they set.

What if I have more questions?

Feel free to contact James Do or me if you need personal statement revisions, etc. We are here to help our students.

James Do: jdo@perfect2400.com

Michael Tao: mtao@perfect2400.com