My College Cookbook

Chef: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

# Defining the Best Fit

What are the most important factors that you would consider when selecting a school? What do you care about the most? If deciding among multiple schools, what would be the make-or-break factor? These questions are meant to get you thinking about what you would want in a college or university.

| **Priority Category** | **Specific Considerations** | **Importance**  **(1 - low, 5 - high)** | **Specific Notes / Preferences** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Location | *- Urban vs. rural*  *- College bubble vs. integrated into surroundings*  *- Region of country*  *- Proximity to home*  *- Weather* |  |  |
| School Size | *- # of students (undergrad vs grad, specific programs, size of dorms, etc.)*  *- distance to travel across campus*  *- walkable vs transportation* |  |  |
| Academics | *- Programs / Majors offered*  *- Rankings*  *- Faculty strength*  *- Degree requirements* |  |  |
| Cost & Aid | *- Tuition*  *- Financial aid availability*  *- Scholarships* |  |  |
| Campus Culture | *- Student / faculty diversity*  *- Student organizations*  *- Campus events*  *- Party culture* |  |  |
| Housing | *- On-campus housing quality*  *- Housing requirements*  *- Off-campus options*  *- Living expenses, amenities* |  |  |
| Career Support | *- Internship search help*  *- Internship, job placements*  *- Alumni network*  *- Career services* |  |  |
| Facilities | *- Buildings (classes, libraries, gyms)* |  |  |
| Study Abroad | *- Travel opportunities*  *- Exchange programs* |  |  |
| Reputation | *- National rankings*  *- Public perception* |  |  |
| Other |  |  |  |

# Identifying Colleges & Universities

There are thousands of postsecondary options to choose from – so how do you narrow down the choices? Schools largely fall into one of three buckets; a school’s placement varies from person to person.

|  | **Safeties** | **Targets** | **Reaches** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Details | Highly likely to get in | Good chance to get in | Ambitious, but still possible |
| Acceptance Rate Range | 70%+ | 30-70% | <30% |
| Applicant’s goal | Guarantee admission somewhere you’d be happy | Solid fit schools | Dream schools; high risk/high reward |
| Other notes | Ensure you have at least 1-2 safeties (as backup) | Could be in-state or out-of-state options | Varies on the applicant’s goals; not necessary if not desired |

As you search for your own schools that fall into each of these buckets, be true to yourself: avoid underestimating or overestimating your abilities in categorizing a school.

| **School** | **Bucket (safety/target/reach)** | **Notes (location, program, pros/cons, etc.)** |
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# Applicant Profile

Here is space for you to organize your thoughts about you!

| **Category** | **Details** |
| --- | --- |
| Classes you’ve taken |  |
| Volunteer Experiences |  |
| Clubs / Extracurriculars (school-related, personal) |  |
| Achievements & Awards |  |
| Meaningful Experiences |  |
| Hobbies |  |

What are the top 3 personality traits your **friends** would use to describe you?

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What are the top 3 personality traits your **family** would use to describe you?

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What parts about you would you want any and every school to know after reading your application?

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# College Essay Brainstorming

Here, you’ll begin thinking about potential topics or experiences that match some typical essay question. Begin by thinking broadly, then narrow down to more specifics. The goal here is to build a portfolio of ideas that you can pull from when writing each of your essays. Note that some ideas can fit multiple categories!

| **Category/Prompt/Question** | **Ideas** |
| --- | --- |
| Toughest challenge/obstacle & how have you grown from it? |  |
| Proudest achievement/moment |  |
| How have you dealt with diverse perspectives? |  |
| An academic scenario that sparked intellectual excitement |  |
| How has a passion shaped some aspect of you? |  |
| What is a hobby that you enjoy / adds meaning to your life? |  |
| When was a time that led to meaningful personal growth? |  |
| How your background/heritage/upbringing shaped your worldview? |  |
| Meaningful experiences that gave you a new perspective |  |

# Final Portfolio

As you complete different portions of your applications – from general information to specific essay questions – keep things straight and located in one place with this organized sheet!

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Major(s)/Program(s):

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Test Scores:

| **SAT/ACT** | **Date** | **Score** | **Details (e.g. section scores)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
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Letters of Recommendation:

| **Recommender** | **Info about recommender (e.g. school subject, work supervisor, etc.)** | **School(s)** |
| --- | --- | --- |
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Scholarships:

| **Scholarship Name** | **Amount** | **Dates (e.g. opens, due, submitted)** |
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Other notes:

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*Be sure to download our* [*App Map spreadsheet planner*](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/u/0/d/1tx2S8q6OUmJ7ahA_ij18lQ9dwJcIzzoRwt5s3XrW_x4/edit) *to keep track of your schools, requirements, and important deadlines!*