

## HAPPY NEW YEAR!!

**Best wishes to all of you  
for a very happy and peaceful  
2026!**

I have LOVED working with all of my students and families this past year, and I can't wait to help my juniors and sophomores navigate the whole college process in 2026!

I frankly feel quite honored to be in this role. I am constantly inspired by my students' resilience, determination, and thoughtfulness; they truly give me great hope for the future. Huge gratitude, too, to my peers and colleagues who pass along incredible knowledge and wisdom as we try to make sense of college admissions these days!



# THE ROAD TO COLLEGE READINESS + HOW PARENTS CAN HELP

We want our kids to be ready to handle the challenges of college. That means that, as anxiety-provoking as it may feel, we need to start loosening the reins and letting go well before our kids head off. Here is a checklist of things that all kids should be able to do before they're walking through that quad in September of their first year in college. If they can't do many of these things, please consider a gap year; you (ideally) want them to hit the ground running!

- Wake themselves up in the morning.
- Put themselves to bed at a decent hour.
- Manage their screens and other distractions.
- Do their own laundry. That includes sorting, washing, folding, and (ahem) even putting it away.
- Make a few meals. Boil pasta. Make rice. Cook eggs.
- Make (and reschedule) their own appointments. That includes appointments with me!
- Talk with adults. In person, on the phone, or over Zoom. If they have a problem at school, they are the ones who should talk with the appropriate teachers/counselors to resolve the problem.
- Manage medications on their own. That includes taking their medication/s, noticing when they need refills, calling the pharmacy, and picking up prescriptions.
- Manage their stress. Do they need to get exercise? Do they need to do some yoga or meditate? Have they figured out what works best for them?
- Deal with their own transportation. Can they take the train/subway by themselves? Can they find rides for themselves when they need them? Can they fill the car with gas?
- Manage their workload without your assistance or your reminders. Provide them with a coach to give them the skills they need, if necessary.
- Earn and manage money. Do they understand the difference between credit cards and debit cards? Have they learned how to budget their money?

**Remember: we will not be with them at college to help them do all of these things. We need to let them make mistakes and figure things out before the stakes are higher. Let's let them figure out how to live without us!**

# FOR JUNIORS: COLLEGE VISIT CHECKLIST

Now's the time to visit colleges (well, once students are back on campus)! Check out these guidelines and questions, and take the time to record your thoughts. Trust me, colleges quickly start to blend together. You can print this checklist from my website: [www.mgsed.com/free-resources](http://www.mgsed.com/free-resources) OR you can use this Google form: <https://forms.gle/p3qpA36dxV4SFWJs6>

## COLLEGE VISIT CHECKLIST

### COLLEGE NAME:

LOCATION:

SIZE:

### ADMISSIONS CONTACT:

NAME:

EMAIL:

PHONE:

### THINGS TO DO:

- Take a campus tour
- Eat at a cafeteria
- Visit the library
- Talk with the admissions office
- Read the bulletin boards
- Read the campus newspaper
- Sit in on a class
- Visit the Student Center
- Visit dorms and other housing
- Check out recreational facilities
- Talk with students
- Tour the neighboring town/city
- Check out an off-campus hangout
- Listen to the campus radio station
- Visit the bookstore

### THINGS TO ASK A CURRENT STUDENT:

- Why did you decide to go here?
- What are your 3 favorite things about this college?
- What surprised you when you first arrived?
- What are 2 things you would change if you could?
- Who are 3 people who helped you the most your first year? How did you meet them?
- What was your most uncomfortable experience your first year? How did you get comfortable?
- How do you get around campus/town?
- How did you meet your closest friends?
- What do you do in your free time?
- How would you describe the social scene?

### RATE THESE:

The people I met	1	2	3	4	5
The dorms	1	2	3	4	5
The classrooms, studios, labs	1	2	3	4	5
The campus	1	2	3	4	5
The neighboring city/town	1	2	3	4	5
The social vibe	1	2	3	4	5
The food	1	2	3	4	5
The safety on campus	1	2	3	4	5
The COVID response	1	2	3	4	5

WHAT I LOVE ABOUT THIS PLACE:

WHAT I REALLY DON'T LIKE  
ABOUT THIS PLACE:

CAN I PICTURE MYSELF HERE?

YES!!!

NO WAY!!

NOT SURE!

# THOUGHTS FOR SENIORS ABOUT...

## Denials:

Many selective colleges note that they have to deny highly qualified students each year. Pomona, in fact, acknowledges that **75% of their applicants are admissible!** There are so many factors that go into these decisions, and many of them are completely out of students' control (remember institutional priorities, which we are not privy to and which change year-to-year). If you've been denied to one of your favorite schools, take the time to process and even grieve that news. But remember that rejection is part of life, and learning to deal with rejection with resilience at a young age will actually serve you well in the long run. Trust me on this. Then I want you to get up again and think about all of the other options you're going to have (that wise, balanced list just about assures that you'll get into about 40% of the colleges on your list). The option that seems least interesting right now might just be the one that sings out to you in April!

## Deferrals:

Many students are surprised when they learn that they weren't admitted or denied, but deferred. Being deferred means that your application will be reviewed once more with the **regular decision** applicants. So what should you do if you're deferred? First, you can talk with your guidance counselor to see if they'd be willing to call the college to find out why exactly you were deferred. Then you can try to address whatever was raised. (Many times they are waiting for your midyear grades). Second, in late January, you can submit a letter of continued interest (LOCI) where you convey yet again how there's a real fit between you and the college. Be specific, earnest, and to the point. Describe any additional awards you've received or any cool things you've done that were not in your original application. But **please note that you should follow directions from the college**; if they say that you don't need to do anything, *then don't do anything*. But if they open the door to a letter, take the opportunity! Think, too, about an additional letter of recommendation that you could submit (your recommender would submit it directly to the admissions office; have them include your birthdate so that the letter can be matched with your file). **And remember: it's not over til it's over!** Colleges look to shape their class during the regular decision round (using those institutional priorities). I've had many students get into colleges during regular decision where they really didn't think they had a fighting chance. For this reason, I STRONGLY recommend that students wait to hear from all of their colleges before they decide which college is where they'll thrive the most (and, remember, that may not be the highest ranked college on your list).

## Early Decision 2:

Early Decision 2 (ED2) is tricky for many students, especially in this age of deferrals. Many students don't have a second top choice, and if they were deferred, they want to wait and see if that deferral could change to an admit. Few colleges report on the difference in acceptance rates between ED1 and ED2, so it's hard to know how likely it is to be admitted through ED2. Know that you often can switch from regular decision to ED2. For many, ED2 is a real toss-up. So, sleep on it, make a decision, and then don't look back. And revel in the fact that you're done applying to college!

*I help students and their families navigate the college admissions process. I empower students to figure out who they are and where they belong, and I provide structure, insight, and enthusiasm as they apply to colleges that are the best fit academically, socially, and financially. Contact me for a 30 minute complimentary session to learn more!*



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