

Top Ten Strengths and Experiences
Colleges look for in a High School Student

1. A high school curriculum that challenges the student. Academically successful students should include several Honors and Advanced Placement classes.
2. Grades that represent strong effort and an upward trend. Grades should show an upward trend over the years. However, slightly lower grades in a rigorous program are preferred to all A's in less challenging coursework.
3. Solid scores on standardized tests (SAT, ACT). These should be consistent with high school performance.
4. Passionate involvement in a few activities, demonstrating leadership and initiative. Depth, not breadth, of experience is most important.
5. Community service showing evidence of being a "contributor." Activities should demonstrate concern for other people and a global view.
6. Work or out-of-school experiences (including summer activities) that illustrate responsibility, dedication and development of areas of interest. Work or other meaningful use of free time can demonstrate maturity.
7. A well-written essay that provides insight into the student's unique personality, values and goals. The application essay should be thoughtful and highly personal. It should demonstrate careful and well constructed writing.
8. Letters of recommendation from teachers and guidance counselor that give evidence of integrity, special skill, and positive character traits. Students should request recommendations from teachers who respect their work in an academic discipline.
9. Supplementary recommendations by adults who have had significant direct contact with the student. Letters from coaches or supervisors in long-term work or volunteer activities are valuable; however, recommendations from casual acquaintances or family friends, even if they are well known, are rarely given much weight.
10. Anything special that makes the student stand out from the rest of the applicants! Include honors, awards, evidence of unusual talent or experience, or anything else that makes the student unique. Overall, colleges are seeking students who will be active contributing members of the student body.