

How Many Colleges Should You Apply to?

The short answer to this question is that you should apply to between 5 and 8 colleges.

To explain it further, **the perfect college list consists of schools in three categories: Safety, Target, and Reach**. When you choose colleges in each of these categories, you have a higher chance of getting into one of them.

1. Safety Schools (1-2 colleges)

Safety Schools, sometimes called “back-up schools,” are schools you’re practically guaranteed admission to because your grades, qualifications, test scores, and class rank are ***stronger than the school’s average for admitted students***.

In general, safety schools have high acceptance rates. You only need to select one or two schools because you know you’ll likely get into them. But don’t just apply because you know you’ll get in. Choose safety schools that you can see yourself attending.

2. Target Schools (2-3 colleges)

To be considered a **Target School** (or Match School), your grades and test scores should ***fall into the accepted range of the school’s most recently admitted class***.

While acceptance isn’t guaranteed, you should have a 40-60% chance of getting accepted. Obviously, there are no guarantees, but applying to two or three of these schools should give you a high probability of getting into at least one of them.

3. Reach Schools (2-3 colleges)

If your grades and academic credentials fall in the lower range or ***below a school’s average from the previous year’s accepted students***, then that school would be considered a **Reach School** (also called a Dream School).

Your chance of getting into these schools is low but not impossible. These schools are so difficult to get into because their acceptance rate is extremely low. That means only a few students get accepted, and even the best of the best sometimes gets rejected.

Another reason you may not get accepted to a reach school is because your grades, tests, or general academics don’t match the school’s average. Again, there’s always a chance your essays or extracurriculars might catch the attention of an admissions officer.

Getting into your reach school might be a long shot, but that doesn’t mean you shouldn’t try!