



## Picking the Club That's Right for You!

### Separating From The Pack – Choosing Activities With Intention

*More competitive than ever, grades and test scores are no longer enough to gain admission into college. Setting yourself up for success—and apart from your peers—requires thoughtful and strategic long-term planning.*

As you gear up for college, you might notice that your peers have packed their schedules with perpetual activity. Back-to-back meetings, tutoring, clubs, sports—all of it focused on one thing: college admissions. But what if we said that focusing on something besides academics—cultivating your passions, for example—can play a more significant role in college acceptance than a jam-packed schedule? Here's the thing, college admission departments are no longer interested in seeing how much you can do but instead how much of an impact you can make. Again, that impact isn't measured in terms of quantity, but quality. What good is a jam-packed schedule if you aren't passionate about anything that's taking up your time?

We encourage you to think less about fitting an ideal mold and more about how you can create a mold. In an age of constant social media feedback, [toxic positivity culture](#), and glorified success, it might feel like there's never enough time to do enough. This doesn't mean throw clubs and activities by the wayside, however. Instead, consider trimming your schedule to allow yourself more free time to do things that matter to you. An intentional investment and meaningful involvement in a few activities ultimately reads better than membership in fifteen different clubs—none of which you have an active and contributing role. Below are some tips to help you figure out how to maximize your time while setting yourself up for an eye-catching college application.

### Tip 1: Quality Over Quantity

It's good to demonstrate diversity through extracurricular involvement. However, specialization has its benefits. If you have no interest in band, don't take it up because you think it's what elite colleges want to see. Fitting into a mold does not generate value for you, your time, or your community. Instead, spend some time participating in various clubs to discover your interests. When your passions begin to emerge, find ways to become more intentionally involved with what you like doing. Then, streamline your involvement in the things that no longer help you cultivate this passion or skill. Colleges will recognize an applicant who dabbles a little bit in a whole lot as an unfavorable candidate. If you find yourself needing to pick up a part-time job or on a varsity sports team, colleges will "count" that in their assessment of your candidacy because it represents quality and necessary time commitments. Particularly if you need to work to support your family, make a note of this in your application, and know that contributions in that way will pay off.

### Tip 2: Intentional Engagement Overtime

When you first begin high school, don't expect to take over as club president on day one. Instead, find something you like and *stick with it*. Commitment and loyalty provide opportunities to deepen your engagement over time. Use freshman year to learn the ropes of high school and get settled. Sophomore year, ask the leadership team to take on roles with more meaningful contributions or present an idea to the group. Don't be a participant; instead, figure out ways to become an actor—someone who takes action to create impactful and sustainable change. If your school doesn't have a club that matches your interests and passions, start one! Remember, you don't have to hold a leadership role to make an impact. Maybe you're someone who prefers to work behind the scenes—that's OK! Whatever you do, do something and do it well.

### Tip 3: Think Outside The Box!

You don't necessarily have to affiliate yourself with your school to become a standout applicant. Perhaps there are some local organizations whose mission and work piques your interests. Say you're interested in documentaries and film production, but your school doesn't have the resources or clubs to support that passion. Is there a local college that you could reach out to who might be able to support you? How about a local news station? Do you have a passion for politics with no way to earn a spot in the student government at your school? How about contacting a local political office? Or your community mayor or representative? These places are always seeking volunteers with an interest in serving their communities. Ask a teacher to help you draft an email seeking support from organizations outside the school. If you're stuck on where to begin—brainstorm together. When trying to connect with local organizations, be

persistent! Don't fear hearing "no," and never let that possibility keep you from sending a professional email asking for participation, assistance, and advice. If you reach a dead-end, thank whomever you emailed for their time and ask if they might be able to redirect you to someone who can help to cultivate your interests.

### Tip 4: Orient Yourself With A Community-Impact Mindset

Much of today's college admissions process involves students packing their resumes to get into college. Though that is an important goal, it should never be your sole motivation for doing something, particularly community work. **Find your why; then, find allies.** If you aren't approaching community-based work with compassion, patience, and value, you can end up causing more harm than good

for those whom you are supposed to help. Be present in the work, do your homework—particularly if you're interested in political activism. Remember, community impact does not have to be grand or spectacular to matter. You don't have to start a march with a million people or go viral and gain a hundred-thousand followers on social media. The most impactful community activists never sought fame. They worked intentionally and consistently with joy because they knew what they did mattered.

Finding ways to stand out in today's world seems like an impossible task. Someone is always doing more, better, and faster than you are able to. **That is OK!** Colleges aren't looking for perfection and fame so resist comparing yourself to others. They want you to focus on being the best version of yourself—however that looks. High school is an exciting time to begin to discover your why. In life, your why will ebb and flow as you continue to gain experiences and wisdom. Yet, strive toward what makes you feel most whole. That will not only help you gain admissions into college, but it will unlock an ability to create a life full of vibrancy and purpose.

