



Build a Balanced College List

You want to apply to the right colleges for you. College is a match to be made—not a prize to be won, and you deserve the best college match possible. Be sure to work with your school counselor or other trusted adult or mentor as you work through these five steps:

Step

Why

How

1

PERSONAL REFLECTION

To know which colleges will serve you best, you have to know yourself. Explore what you are good at, what drives you, and research how that can inform your major and future career aspirations.

Think about your personal values, your academic profile, and your expectations and needs of a college campus. Don't forget, affordability is important in your next step!

When you create an Encourage account, you will be prompted through many of these questions to support your reflection.

2

PRIMARY RESEARCH

There are more than 4,000 postsecondary institutions in the United States. Without research, finding your perfect college match will be nearly impossible.

Use your personal reflection and a research tool match with colleges that meet your needs and expectations.

Encourage will provide you 25 personalized college matches based on your profile and desires.

3

SORT: LIKELY / TARGET / RESEARCH

With a list of colleges that match your needs, you can sort them into three buckets based on your chances of being admitted:

- **Likely:** schools that typically admit students like you.
- **Target:** schools that often admit students like you; your profile matches their average student.
- **Reach:** schools that help you aim high; your profile might be slightly below their average student.

Be sure to know your numbers. Knowing your GPA, ACT and SAT scores, and class rank help you compare your numbers to different colleges' student profiles.

Use Encourage to explore school features like majors offered, school size, and location.

4

NARROW & BALANCE

You can balance your list and decide where you'll apply by narrowing each category: likely/target/reach. By applying to institutions across all three categories, you can feel good about being admitted to schools that match your needs and stretch you to the best matched college for you.

You can build a balanced list by having at least 2 schools in each category—a minimum of 6 total. You can always add more, but try to keep your total list to no more than 10 schools.

5

PREPARE & APPLY

Now that you have your final list, you want to be prepared for the application timelines. Be sure to research admission requirements, deadlines, and fees so you can apply successfully online.

You can use Encourage to understand the type of admission, deadlines, application fees, and find links to the college application sites. Also, be sure to know which schools are on the Common Application. This allows you to submit one application for multiple schools.

Download the Encourage App and get more college planning resources at encourageme.com