



Build a Balanced College List

Apply to colleges that are right for you! You'll thrive in a college that matches your goals. Meet with your school counselor or other trusted adult or mentor. They can help 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. What do you enjoy? What drives you? Use those answers to help you determine your major and future career aspirations.

Reflect on your personal values, academic profile, and what you'd like to experience during college. Remember, affordability is also a major factor when building your college list.

When you create an Encourage account, you'll walk through a series of questions that will help support your reflection.

2

PRIMARY RESEARCH

There are more than 4,000 postsecondary institutions in the United States. Research is important to help you find your perfect college match.

Incorporate your personal reflection into a research tool (like Encourage). It will match you with colleges that meet your needs and expectations.

Encourage provides 25 personalized college matches based on your profile and interests.

3

SORT: LIKELY / TARGET / RESEARCH

Once you have a list of colleges that match your needs, sort them into the following categories:

Likely: These schools fit your profile and accept students with GPAs and test scores below yours.

Target: Your profile, GPA, and test scores match the school's typical student.

Reach: These schools are at the top of your range and typically accept students with higher GPAs and test scores.

Know your numbers! If you know your GPA, class rank, and ACT/SAT scores, you can compare those numbers to each college's average student profile.

Encourage makes it easy to compare colleges by majors, size, and location.

4

NARROW & BALANCE

Balance your likely, target, and reach lists, and apply to colleges in all three categories.

You'll get into a school that meets your needs and offers an academic environment where you will thrive.

To build a balanced list, choose at least two schools in each category. You can always add more, but keep your total to less than ten schools.

5

PREPARE & APPLY

Now that you have your final list, research application timelines, admission requirements, deadlines, and fees before you start the online application process.

Use Encourage to find links to college application sites and learn about the types of admission, deadlines, and application fees. If your schools are on the Common Application, you can submit one application for multiple schools!

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