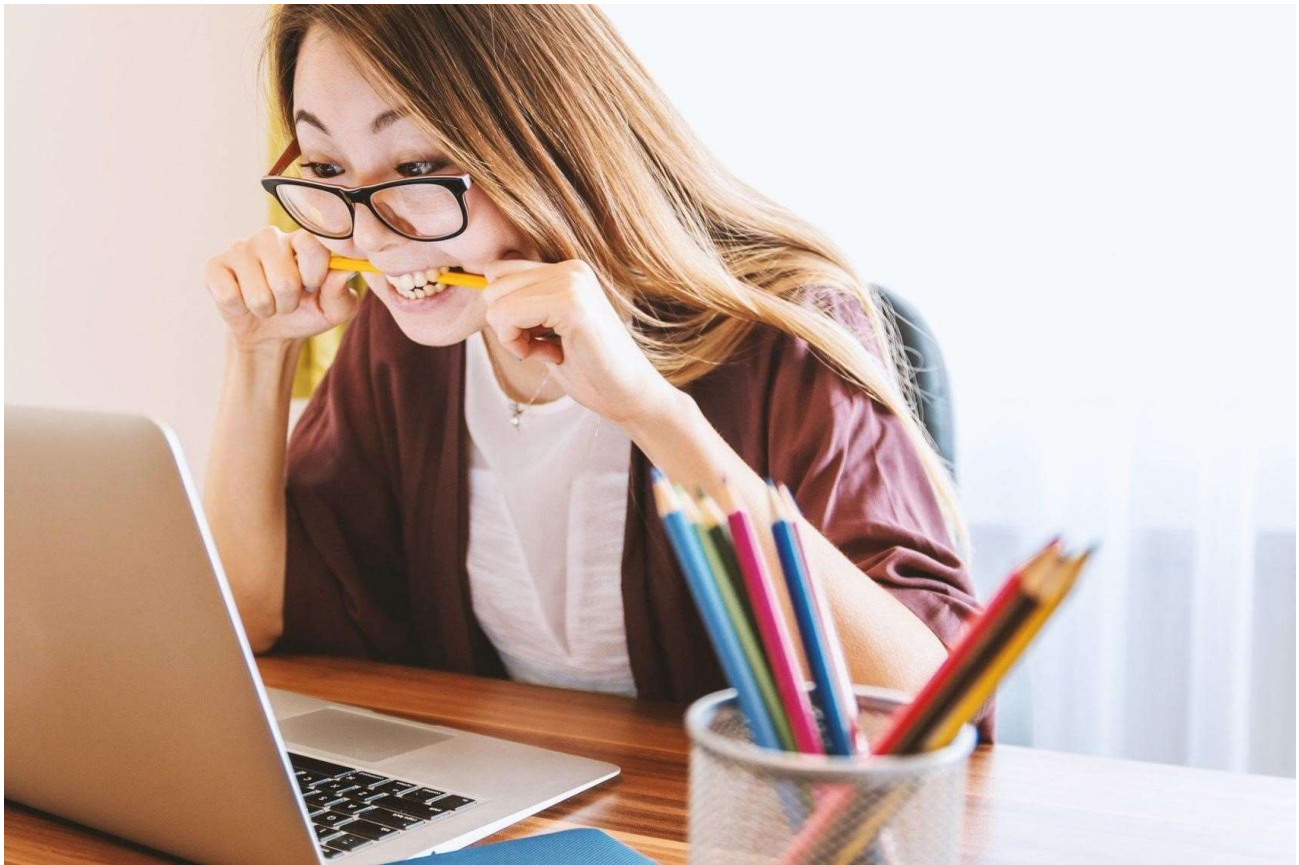


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7 steps to college admissions success while you wait for an answer

By Barbara Connolly For MediaNews Group



When it comes to the college admissions process, waiting for answers can be the most difficult part. But it's important to remain proactive even during the time you await decisions from your target schools.

For many situations in life, waiting can be the hardest part. And when it comes to college admissions, that definitely proves true.

By now, many students have submitted applications to their preferred schools. The i's were dotted, the t's crossed. The hard work is done. Now, decisions are in the hands of admissions committees, and the waiting game begins.

Students and families can easily become anxious or pessimistic during this part of the admissions process, feeling they no longer have control over the decisions they await. But there's no need to despair, as there are proactive steps students can take during this time.

Submit Remaining Applications ASAP

The final deadline for some applications may be weeks away, but it is advantageous to submit them earlier. Unexpected issues can arise, including ones that require outside help to solve — like college websites crashing. College admissions offices are flooded with applications this time of year, so allowing extra time for them to process your applications can help.

Thank Your Supporters

Once applications are successfully submitted, don't forget to extend thanks to the people who helped you along the way. Family, friends, teachers or anyone who offered support and guidance will appreciate the thought, as will your recommenders and college counselor. A handwritten thank-you note may seem old-fashioned, but the people who have helped you achieve your college ambitions deserve the gesture.

Buckle Up for a Longer Wait

Although students who submitted early applications may have already heard or will hear back from schools in the coming weeks, that doesn't always mean they will receive a final decision. Many students will be "deferred," meaning the admissions team needs more time to decide whether they are a good fit. While deferral is disappointing, it's a positive outcome. It's not a rejection and shouldn't be treated as such. Don't fly the white flag yet!

There's work left to be done. That's why now, all students should:

Keep Up the Good Work

Now is not the time to let grades, extracurriculars and behavior in school slide. Colleges often see your first-semester grades and use them as part of decision-making criteria. If you are deferred, it may benefit you to have someone send in an additional recommendation on your behalf, so it's important to continue to impress your teachers. Do not coast through your last months in high school. Stay active in extracurricular activities and remember to update your resume with new activities or awards, so you can update colleges that are still deciding on you.

Follow Up

Once students submit applications, they may be inundated with follow-up emails. Although it seems overwhelming, especially for students who submit many applications, the work is not over yet. Read all follow-up emails and look for additional instructions schools need you to follow. Many schools require applicants to create a student account on their website in order to receive updates on their application. Additionally, through data tracking, schools may notice if you are not reading their emails and following their instructions. If these instructions involve getting on the school's website, even better. Again, through data tracking, some schools can actually see when you are looking at them online. This may ultimately factor into their admissions decisions.

Interview

While colleges are processing early applications, many marshal the help of their alumni network to conduct student interviews. If you are contacted for an alumni interview, graciously accept. It's a chance to tell the college more about yourself and also learn more about the school. Dress appropriately and be prepared to talk about your interest in the school, as well as what you would bring to campus if admitted. Also, bring a resume to the interview. Your interviewer will be tasked with writing a note to the college about you, and written information will be appreciated. After the interview, follow up with a "thank you" email to the interviewer.

Relax

Suggesting relaxation may seem odd at the end of a list on how to be proactive, but the college admissions process is nearly a year long — you can't stay in a high level of stress and excitement the whole time. Although it can be extremely nerve-wracking to simply sit and wait to hear back, students and families will have to find ways to cope. Enjoy family dinners — and make sure to talk about other topics beyond college admissions.

Remember, no matter what, you've accomplished a great deal making it this far in the process. You deserve some down time.

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