

Speak the Language: College Admissions

If you're not familiar with the college admissions process, it probably seems like it has a language all its own. To help you learn the lingo, here are definitions of some of the college admission terms you're likely to come across.

Acceptance Rate: The percentage of applicants a college accepts for admission.

Accreditation: Certification that a college meets the standards of a state, regional or national association.

Candidates Reply Date Agreement (CRDA): This agreement, sponsored by the National Association for College Admission Counseling, states that in order to allow students to consider all their college options, students have until May 1 to accept any college's offer of admission.

Common/Universal Application: Standardized application forms accepted by many colleges. After you fill out the Common or Universal application, you can send it to any college that accepts it as the institution's own application.

Competitive College: A college with a rigorous, highly selective admissions process. Competitive colleges typically admit fewer than 25 percent of applicants.

Deferred Admission: A student's option to defer an offer of admission for up to two years.

Personal Statement: Sometimes referred to as a college application essay. Personal statements are essays that give admissions officers insights into your character, personality and motivation.

Reach School: A college where admission might be a stretch for you, based on the average GPA and test scores of accepted students and the college's overall admission requirements.

Retention Rate: The percentage of students who return to a college for their sophomore year. An indicator of student satisfaction.

Safety School: A college where, based on the average GPA and test scores of accepted students, you have a high likelihood of being admitted.

Student-Faculty Ratio: The number of students at a college compared to the number of faculty. Some colleges see this as an indicator of class size and professor accessibility, but a lower ratio doesn't guarantee either. For a true indication of class size and professor accessibility, speak with students and professors at a college.

Supplemental Material: Items you include with your college application to provide more information about your talents, experiences and goals. Materials could include work samples, additional essays, newspaper clippings, music CDs or art slides. Verify if a college welcomes (or requests) these materials before sending.

Transcript: An official record of classes you have taken and the grades you received. Usually you must provide a high school transcript with your college application.

Waitlist: A list of students a college may eventually decide to admit if space becomes available.

Yield: The percentage of accepted students who go on to enroll at a college. Competitive colleges have high yield rates.

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