



How to Make a Good Impression on Admissions Officers

Although admissions decisions in the largest state universities are based primarily on applicants' grades and test scores, a more holistic assessment is used just about everywhere else. Consequently, applicants should consider how they are coming across to admissions officers in every interaction, not merely on the written application.

1. Find out if there is an admissions officer in charge of your region. Sometimes the person responsible for recruitment in your area has no special control over admissions decisions, but most often the college representatives who come to your high school will be the first readers of your application and the ones who decide which candidates to promote when convening with a larger committee. If you pay a visit to the campus, ask for your admissions counselor's business card so you have the name and contact information should you wish to communicate with him or her in the future.
2. Admissions officers want to feel they know and like the students they are admitting, so if you're interested in a school whose representative gives a presentation at your high school, introduce yourself following the presentation. Be prepared to chat briefly about your interest in the college and perhaps ask a few questions about the majors or extra-curricular activities you might be interested in. If you have a one page resume, bring a copy to give to the admissions officer. This will help him or her to connect your name with a face and remember you later on when reading your application.
3. If you have an interview with anyone on or off campus, or even if you have a brief conversation with an admissions officer after attending an information session on campus, write a thank you note within a week afterward, thanking the individual for his or her time and any information that impressed you about the school. This can be either a handwritten note sent by regular mail or an e-mail, but whichever

way you send it, make sure that you use standard grammar and spelling. End it by writing “Sincerely,” followed by your full name, the name of your high school, and your high school graduation year.

4. Since you will be communicating with colleges primarily via e-mail, if your current e-mail address might not reflect well on you, now’s the time to create a new one. Some people opt to create an address that they use exclusively for college communications. Whether you do that or not, be sure to check regularly whichever e-mail address you give the colleges so as to ensure that you don’t miss any important communications.

5. Be careful what you post on social media sites. Many admissions officers are recent college graduates who regularly use Facebook, and numerous stories have surfaced over the years of their denying or even revoking admission to candidates on account of something they’ve seen there. Recently, for example, an applicant was denied admission to a school where she was about to receive a merit scholarship because the admissions officer saw a posting in which she bragged about admission to another college and said she was definitely choosing it over his school. While admissions officers generally maintain that they don’t look online regularly to glean additional information about candidates, they do sometimes inadvertently encounter something that they don’t feel they can ignore.

6. Applicants, you, not your parents, should be the ones engaging in most of the communications with the colleges. It doesn’t matter who speaks with a secretary to schedule a tour and get directions, but anything else should be handled by you, who are, after all, about to be viewed as an adult once at college. Sometimes when parents accompany students to an interview, they are invited in at the end to ask any questions of their own, but in general, students make a better impression when on their own. An overbearing parent can potentially damage the applicant’s image in the eyes of the admissions officer.

7. Finally, remember that the key to making a good impression is to act friendly and respectful and demonstrate interest and enthusiasm. Under no circumstances should you or your parents say anything negative about anyone else you know who is applying to the college or about the college admissions process itself. That is simply bad form and will damage your own stature in the eyes of any admissions officer.