



# GETTING ORGANIZED FOR THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS PROCESS

**Students-** Complete these three steps in one day, one weekend, or spread out over three weeks, working on one step per week. Just keep moving forward!

## STEP 1: PHYSICAL ORGANIZATION

### ■ **Designate a place specifically for college-related snail mail**

Box, letter tray, or set of three letter trays for Incoming, Hold, Interested, anything that can hold the volumes of college mail that will come to your home, particularly if you have taken AP classes/tests and/or ACT/SAT. Think Harry Potter 1 and Hogwarts' invitations flying through the Dursley's house...you'll need this!

### ■ **Set up a file box, expandable folder, or second box for sorted mail you want to save.**

Go through your stack of mail regularly to recycle or save to do further research. Use a three letter tray system described above, or LABEL with "Save", "Research", "Maybe", or similar.

### ■ **Set up a file drawer or file box with at least 20 manilla folders**

Or go crazy with different colors. Also pick up some hanging folders to put them in. You don't need to label yet.

### **Optional but Recommended:**

### ■ **Buy/find a spiral notebook**

5"x7" is a great size, but whatever works for you. Also pick up a few cool pens (if this motivates you).

### ■ **Buy/find a calendar to hand on your wall, door, or other frequented space**

A typical 8 1/2"x11" family calendar is fine, but I recommend going to Vertex42 or a similar website with free downloadable and customizable calendars and print the style and size you want, to be used solely for your college application process. Electronic calendars can be useful, but hanging a printed calendar in a common location is more likely to keep tasks and deadlines top of mind. But if you and your parents will truly use a digital calendar, then do that!

## STEP 2: DIGITAL ORGANIZATION

### ■ **Create an appropriate email address for your college admissions process**

Don't use your high school email address, and select something professional. "Likes2Party" and "HotLaxPlayer16" needs to stay out of admissions officers' inboxes. Set up a new account on gmail if needed; then college email will self-sort from other email accounts. Use this account for all college admissions related contacts, registrations, and websites. Check this inbox regularly!

### ■ **Set up digital folders in your email account.**

Start with a few folders like "Top Choices", "Contacts", "School Info", "Tests" or other. You can create folders for specific colleges when you start to communicate with admissions reps, sign up for tours of those schools, or know you have a strong interest in a particular school.

### ■ **Optional: Set up a shared Google Drive, including a shared calendar.**

For those families well-versed and comfortable in the digital space, sharing documents and a calendar online can be very efficient, and reminders can be set up for deadlines, appointments, and milestones.

### ■ **Set up digital folders on your hard drive, a shared Google Drive, or a cloud-based location.**

Start with a top level folder called "College Admissions" or "CAP", with subfolders for topics like "Financial Aid", "Research", "Essay", or others. Start with the basics; you can add more as you go.

### ■ **Set up at least two bookmark folders on your browser of choice.**

Label one "Colleges" and the other "College Application Info" (or abbreviate). Modify or add more as appropriate and helpful. The first can be used to save the website of any specific college you are interested in, and the second for anything else-- resources, information, financial aid, etc. You may eventually have more subfolders or primary folders, but this is a good first step.

## STEP 2: DIGITAL ORGANIZATION (CONT)

### ■ **Create a Google Sheet or Excel Document for contact information and other tracking.**

Use for websites which require registration, contacts at colleges, school counselor or other staff contact information (for letters of recommendation, transcript requests, etc.). Label the columns "Name", "Site", "Type", "Description", "Contact Info", "Password", and "Notes". Modify to fit your needs, but as you begin to register for sites you will not want to try to remember all of this information.

### ■ **Review your social media presence.**

Like it or not, YOU ARE YOUR BRAND. And your brand is what you put out into the world in all forms and formats. Have friends tagged you in less than ideal situations? Are your profiles and pages private? Do you need to approve before anyone can post on your platforms? Are the pictures and words you post positive and encouraging? Nothing online can ever really be undone, but you can limit damage and show growth and maturity by taking active control of your image, your words, and your actions.

**TIP:** Both students AND parents should complete Step 3!

## STEP 3: FIND AND BOOKMARK RESOURCES AND DOCUMENTS

### ■ **Bookmark your high school website.**

Include the page or section, if applicable, devoted to college admissions, or post-secondary options. If there is a point of contact listed for those areas, jot down his/her name on the contact sheet you created in the last step.

### ■ **Do the same check with any district or broader school area website, PLUS your state government resources for the college admissions process.**

You should be able to find the latter by doing a web search on "state of [your state's name] and college resources".

### ■ **Bookmark and review your high school calendar and any college application guidelines, and sign up (student AND parent) for school communication emails.**

The latter for general information and if there is a distribution list specifically for post-secondary information.

### **Optional but Recommended:**

### ■ **Begin to gather and file digital and/or hard copy documents:**

- previous year tax returns (student and parent)
- copies of health/shot records, most recent physical, and medical insurance
- list of accounts and assets, e.g., checking, savings, investment, home, etc.
- social security card
- copy of driver's license and passport if applicable

### ■ **If your school or district does not offer robust college admissions resources, search on wealthier school district or school-specific sites in your area or state.**

Most school sites do not require a log-in to view general post-secondary information and any evening college-related presentations may be open to the public.