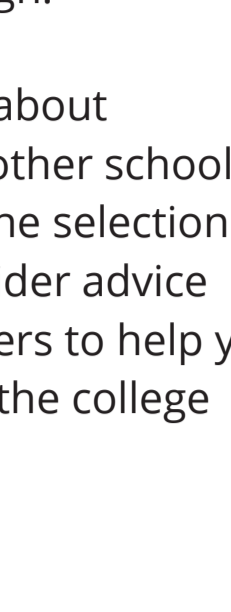


## 9 Ways to Make Yourself Attractive to Your “Right Fit” College

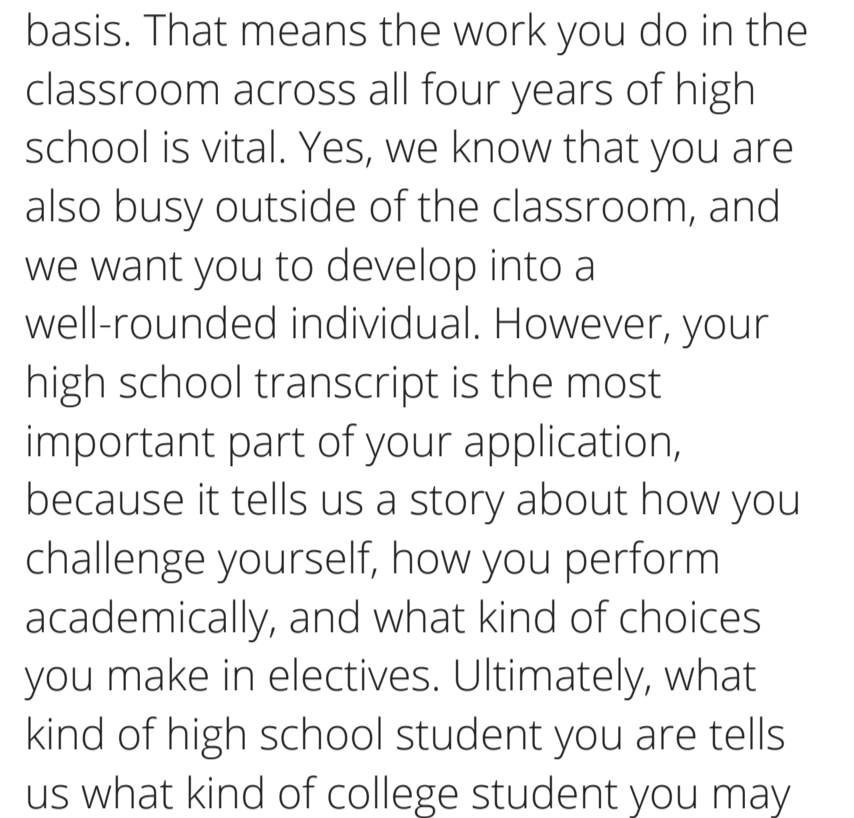
I see it every year: Students in high school nervously trying to figure out how to “get in” to college. College admission, after all, can be a bit of a mystery. What are schools looking for? Do I have the right grades and test scores? What kind of extracurriculars should I be doing? Should I take that tough AP course even though I might not get an A?



By Faye Tydlaska  
Vice President for Admission and Financial Aid, Rollins College

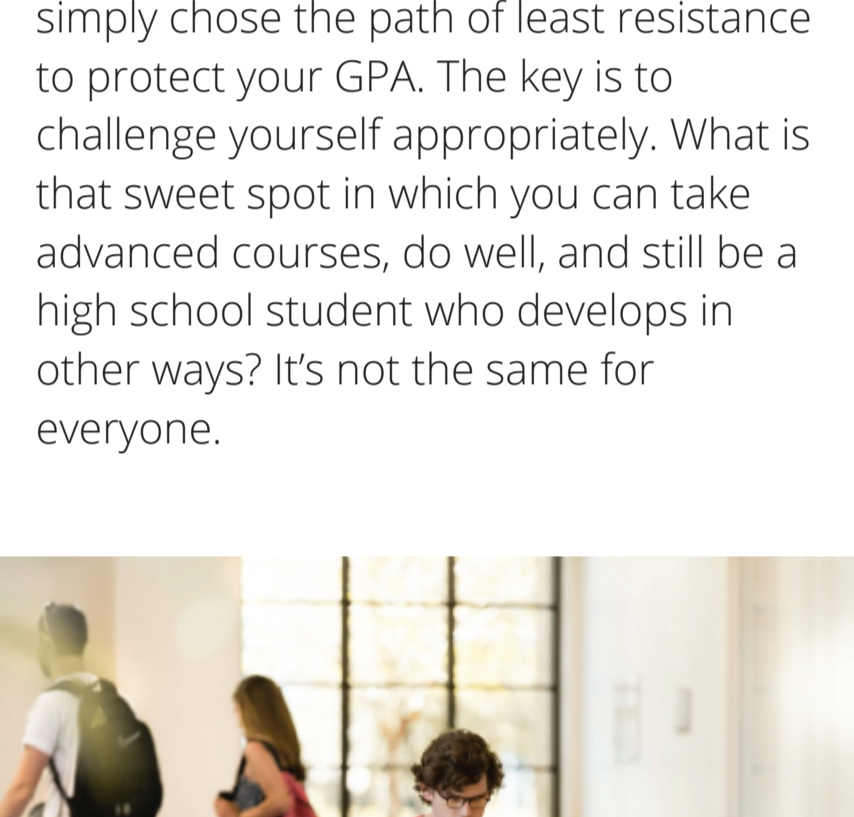
First, know that this too will pass. In a few short years, all your concerns about “getting in” to college will be gone. You’ll be a college student! Each year, I watch as those nervous high school students grow into settled students who are thriving at the right college for them. But just knowing you will get there is not enough.

Whether you’re thinking about enrolling at Rollins or another school, our goal is to demystify the selection process. Here’s some insider advice from our admission officers to help you navigate your search for the college that fits you best.



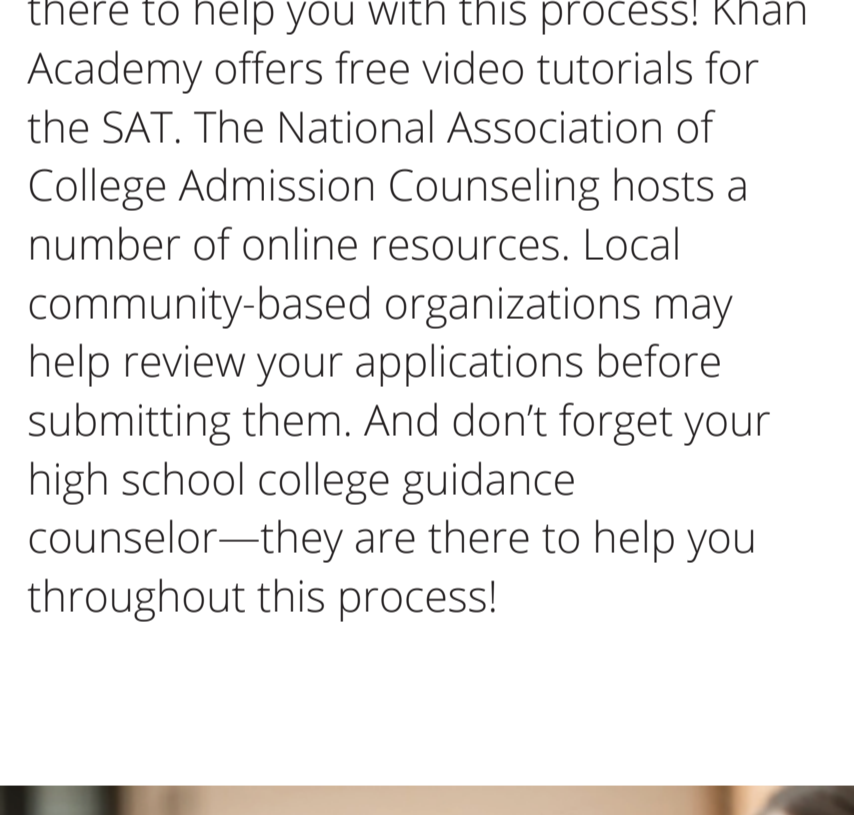
### 1. It’s not about “getting in”

It’s about identifying the schools that are right for you—the ones in which you’ll thrive academically, socially, culturally, and emotionally. Where are your skills and potential a good match? For instance, if you do better academically when you’re able to work one-on-one with your teachers, you should consider smaller colleges that can provide personalized attention. If you do this work on the front end, “getting in” will be less of an issue.



### 2. Academics come first

College is first and foremost about education, so admission offers are first and foremost made on an academic basis. That means the work you do in the classroom across all four years of high school is vital. Yes, we know that you are also busy outside of the classroom, and we want you to develop into a well-rounded individual. However, your high school transcript is the most important part of your application, because it tells us a story about how you challenge yourself, how you perform academically, and what kind of choices you make in electives. Ultimately, what kind of high school student you are tells us what kind of college student you may be.



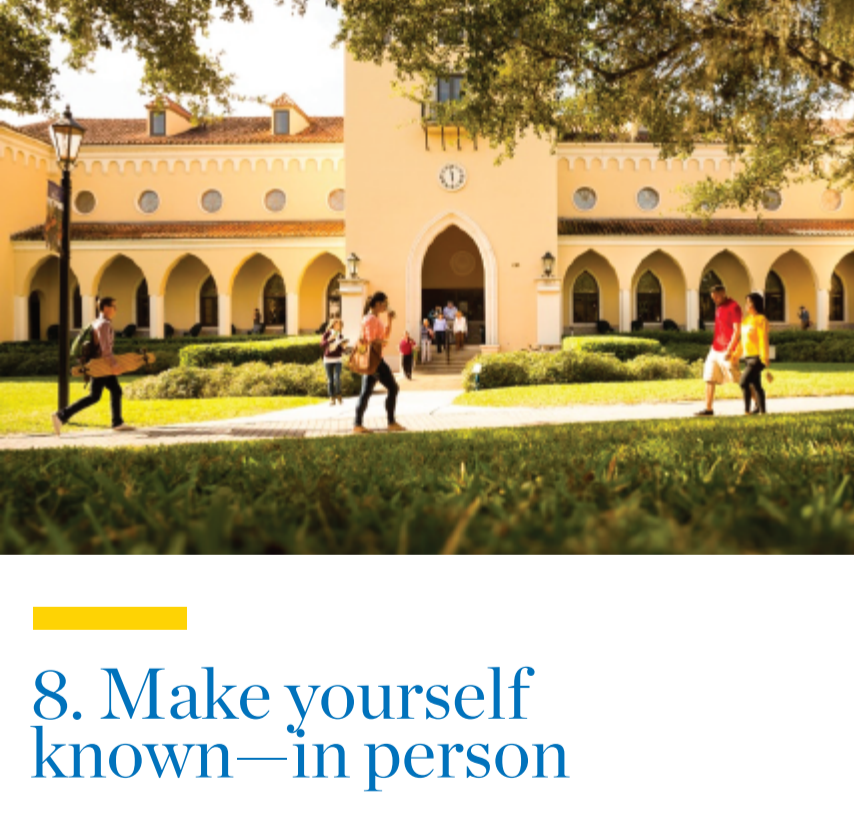
### 3. Challenge yourself appropriately

One of the questions I’m most often asked is if it’s better to take an AP course and get a B or C or take a college prep course to get that A. My answer is: You must challenge yourself, because college will challenge you. We can tell if you simply chose the path of least resistance to protect your GPA. The key is to challenge yourself appropriately. What is that sweet spot in which you can take advanced courses, do well, and still be a high school student who develops in other ways? It’s not the same for everyone.



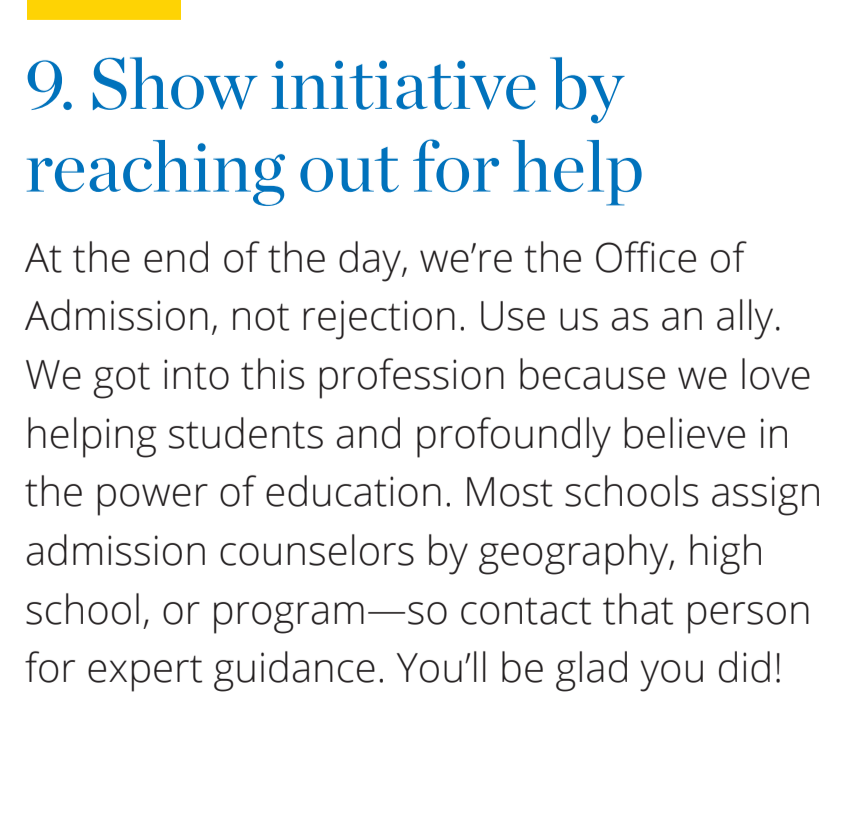
### 4. Have a realistic approach to standardized tests

They’re important at many schools. Take both the ACT and SAT, and take one at least twice. Some students perform better on one and not as well on the other. But, know that many schools (about a quarter of all four-year colleges) allow for some sort of test-flexible admission policy. Do your research to find out what is required where.



### 5. Take advantage of free help

There are so many free resources out there to help you with this process! Khan Academy offers free video tutorials for the SAT. The National Association of College Admission Counseling hosts a number of online resources. Local community-based organizations may help review your applications before submitting them. And don’t forget your high school college guidance counselor—they are there to help you throughout this process!



### 6. Explain anything that needs explaining

Don’t assume a college admission office will automatically know why you had a dip in grades the second semester of your sophomore year or why you changed schools three times or why you don’t list any activities your junior year. If you don’t fill in the gaps or the questions on your application, we will be forced to—and we’re probably going to get it wrong. Most applications allow you to include additional information about yourself. And if they don’t, contact your admission officer to see how you can. Bottom line: If there are inconsistencies in your application, let us know why they are there.



### 7. Be authentic

Colleges aren’t looking for a certain formula when it comes to your high school involvement—we just want to get a sense of you as an actual person. Most of what we see on your application are numbers and letters. But keep in mind we’re building a community of students on our campus. As a result, you should create an authentic resume that helps the admissions team connect with you on a personal level. What makes you you? What kind of student are you, what kind of friend are you, what kind of family member are you? Being detailed about how you spend your time outside of the classroom, beyond just your resume, helps us see you as an individual. Part-time jobs, helping with siblings, favorite hobbies, and service work and causes you’re passionate about all apply.



### 8. Make yourself known—in person

You’ll read more about this in our “Guide to a Stress-Free College Search,” but as applications to the nation’s most selective colleges increase, your demonstrated interest in your top college choices can play an important role in the admission decision. But demonstrate interest wisely. The key is to identify your top two or three schools and make yourself known to them authentically. Visit at least two or three campuses, connect with your dedicated admission counselor, become active on social media, or ask to meet with a professor or member of the staff.



### 9. Show initiative by reaching out for help

At the end of the day, we’re the Office of Admission, not rejection. Use us as an ally. We got into this profession because we love helping students and profoundly believe in the power of education. Most schools assign admission counselors by geography, high school, or program—so contact that person for expert guidance. You’ll be glad you did!



Rollins is regularly recognized as one of America’s most beautiful colleges, but our campus is beautiful for dozens of reasons beyond its stunning lakeside location and perpetually sunny weather. Schedule a visit today and find out why Rollins is the perfect place to launch your future.

[Schedule a Visit](#)

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