

5 A's for Your GPA Cheat Sheet

1. Assess Your GPA

What is "low"?

- » More than .3 below your target school's average GPA for accepted students.
- » Lower than your target school's 75th or 80th percentile of GPAs for accepted students.

2. Analyze the Causes of Your Low GPA

6 questions to ask (in order of increasing difficulty to overcome)

1. **DID** your GPA take a hit your freshman year, but improve every year to a 4.0 photo finish?
2. **DID** illness or circumstances beyond your control cause a drop in your grades for a specific (like 1 or 2 semesters) period of time?
3. **DID** you work part-time to support yourself or did you have a major sports commitment to qualify for an athletic scholarship?
4. **DID** you have poor grades in a "wrong" major until you realized your true calling?
5. **DID** you start out strong, maybe earning a 3.9 during your freshman year, but then lose your motivation and have declining grades with a senior year GPA of 3.1?

3. Address Your Low GPA

3 DO's

1. **DO** ace your admissions exam (GMAT, GRE, MCAT, LSAT, etc.).
2. **DO** take extra classes in your chosen field and earn A's in them.
3. **DO** make sure that the rest of your application and profile are absolutely amazing.

4. Add Context to Your Low GPA

Show that whatever contributed to the poor grades either is no longer a factor in your life, or is something that you've learned to handle so that it doesn't affect your performance.

3 responses to different contexts:

1. **Circumstances beyond your control:** Show that these circumstances are history and demonstrate what you can do when they aren't a factor in your life.
2. **Circumstances partially beyond your control:** Take responsibility for mistakes, if any, and point to evidence of excellence, maturity, and lessons learned.
3. **No extenuating circumstances:** Without being defensive, take responsibility for your actions and provide lots of evidence of outstanding performance, growth, and lessons learned.

5. Avoid these Mistakes in Handling a Low GPA

3 DON'Ts

1. **DON'T** whine or complain about your low GPA.
2. **DON'T** fail to take responsibility for poor judgment or time management.
3. **DON'T** proudly announce you were too busy with activities or took too many classes.

Final point: Stay positive! People with low GPAs can get into top programs.

Let us help you! <http://www.accepted.com/services>