

hushaar.

# A COMPLETE GUIDE FOR COLLEGE ADMISSIONS IN THE US.

# COLLEGE ADMISSIONS: WHERE TO BEGIN?

When I came to know about the opportunity to study abroad, I didn't know where to start. I had no idea what I had to do next.

We know what it's like to be lost, not knowing what your next move should be, so if you're facing the same problem, don't worry - we've got your back.

There are many things you need to take into consideration when applying to a college in the US. We'll go through each one step by step.

# UNDERSTANDING THE 'HOLISTIC APPROACH'

Before we dive into the admission process and all the important stuff, you need to know one basic thing: your academics alone can't guarantee you a place at the best colleges.

Contrary to the selection criteria that we are used to in Kashmir, US colleges look at your overall profile instead of just looking at your grades.

What do I mean by an 'overall profile'? It means that apart from your GPA and SAT scores, the admissions officers will look at your extra-curricular and co-curricular activities, your essays, recommendation letters and any other impressive traits that you may possess.

Don't worry if you don't understand what all those things mean just yet - we'll get there in the later sections.

## STEP 1:

# PICK YOUR COLLEGES AND MAJORS

Now that you have a very basic understanding of how the admission process works, the first thing you'll need to do is to figure out what colleges you want to apply to, and what majors to pursue.

Majors are basically courses that give you a degree when you complete them (generally after 4 years), and colleges are... well, I hope you know what colleges are.

Picking the right colleges and majors can be a daunting task for many, and so we're going to try to make this as easy for you as possible.

One important skill that is crucial for choosing the right colleges - which we have not talked about yet - is research. Yes, researching is a high-value skill that can make or break your dreams of studying abroad, so get into the habit of doing a hefty bit of research every now and then.

Most US colleges will have websites on which you can find information about the courses they offer, their acceptance rates, financial requirements etc. Make sure to look at all of those factors when deciding which college to pick. Ask yourself questions like 'Is my profile strong enough to get me into this college?', 'What are the average scores and GPA of the students who are admitted here?', 'Will I be able to pay for tuition? Does this college have a financial aid policy?'

After a bit of practice, you'll know exactly how and what to research. For your ease, we've compiled a list of all the important websites that you'll be visiting for the admission process and why they are important. You can find them on our resources page.

## STEP 2:

# HIGH-SCHOOL GPA, SAT SCORES, AND OTHER TESTS.

Academics alone can't guarantee you a place in the top colleges, but they still play a 'huge' role in deciding whether you'll get the golden ticket or not. The two most important academic factors are your GPA (Grade Point Average) and your SAT General scores. Let's break those down one by one.

**GPA:** Your GPA is the summary of your academic performance in high-school (Grades 9th to 12th), usually on a scale of 4. It's a good idea to take a look at the average GPA of the colleges that you're applying to, to get an insight as to where you stand in the competition. If your school doesn't have the GPA system, don't worry. The admissions officers will look at where you stand in your class.

**SAT General:** Let's talk about what the SAT is. The SAT or the 'Scholastic Aptitude Test' is a standardized test that helps colleges assess your academic performance on a level that is similar to all students. The SAT consists of two main sections: Math and English (and an optional essay). These are further divided into smaller sections, but we'll not get into that here. The total score is 1600, with Math and English each consisting of 800 points. The SAT is conducted multiple times a year by the College Board.

The resources page consists of the best books and resources to help you prepare for the SAT.

**SAT Subject Tests:** These are standardized tests that test your knowledge on a specific subject or area of study. Most colleges recommend that you take them (check the website of your college for more info). Each test has a maximum score of 800.

Note: You can NOT take the SAT General and the SAT Subject Tests on the same test day. Visit the Collegeboard's official website for more info.

**English Proficiency Tests:** As a non-native English speaker, you'll most likely need to take either the TOEFL or the IELTS, depending on which one your preferred colleges accept. The TOEFL and IELTS are English Proficiency Tests that test your basic understanding of the English language and its usage.

## STEP 3:

# TELL YOUR STORY IN YOUR ESSAYS.

Without any exaggeration, the essays are probably one of the most important parts of your application; do NOT underestimate their importance. The essays are your chance to explain anything that you think might help the admissions officers get a better insight as to who you are.

Do not include things in your essay that've been stated somewhere else in your application. Make every word of your essays count, and make sure that your essay is a snippet from some part of your life.

There are several types of essays that you must know about. The first is the common app essay. This one is common to all colleges that you send your application to. The second type is known as a 'writing supplement'. These supplements are questions specific to each college and you'll have to answer those when you fill out your application for a particular college - usually in the form of a short essay.

You can download the FREE PDF of '50 Successful Harvard Essays' from the resources page to get a better understanding of how to structure your essays.



## STEP 4:

# EXTRA-CURRICULARS AND CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES.

We've already talked about the holistic approach used by colleges to assess your application.

Your extra-curricular activities are what make you stand out as a well-rounded student. Anything apart from your academics that you think has played an important role in your life, or can make your application better, goes in the activity section of the common app.

Do not include menial activities like a 2-day workshop, just for the sake of filling up the slots. Include activities that are either strong and make your application better, or can express your dedication towards something.

The activities can often times be the deciding factor for your admission in a top-tier college.

## STEP 5:

# RECOMMENDATION LETTERS.

An important part of your application is the recommendation letter(s) that come with it.

Your recommendation letters should be from a teacher or mentor who personally knows you, and can write about you in a personal and detailed manner.

Your recommendation letters are very important, so do not skip them over, or leave them for the end.

A valid source of information about you is one of things that an admissions officer can easily trust, so make your recommendation letters count.

## STEP 6:

### FINANCIAL AID.

Let's talk facts. Most of you won't have the luxury of spending around \$70,000 every year for your studies (unless your daddy can make it rain money). This is where financial aid comes in.

Many universities have a limited financial aid that they can provide students with; however, some universities are need-blind, meaning that money is not a problem for them.

You need to do a bit of research about the university that you prefer and its financial aid policies before applying. If they provide financial aid, make sure to avail that benefit.

# AN OVERVIEW:

Let's summarize the entire admission process:

- Pick your colleges and majors.
- GPA, SAT, and other tests.
- Essays
- Activities
- Recommendation letters
- Financial aid

It's just a start, and there's a lot to do, so buckle up - because we've got a surprise for you! Head to the community page of '[Hushaar](#)' and join our active WhatsApp group where you can ask questions and doubts and get answers instantly! But wait, there's more.

How about getting a FREE guidance from students of Kashmir who've made it to the Ivys (Best colleges of the US)?

Got shivers yet? I'd be surprised if you didn't. These students have created a start-up named 'Wath', and they can give you legitimate guidance regarding the admission process.

We currently don't have permission to include any links 'Wath' on our website, but you can contact them on their Instagram handle "@findyourwath".

*Note: 'Hushaar' does not have any affiliations with 'Wath'. The reference to 'Wath' has been provided as it can be considered as a valuable and legitimate resource for learning about college admissions, SAT, etc. from students who have actually made it to some of the best colleges of the US.*

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