

How to get into Columbia University: Admission Requirements



A world-renowned Ivy League institution, Columbia University has long drawn prospective students to its home in the heart of New York City. With a rich history and a reputation for academic excellence that spans centuries, Columbia has attracted applicants since its founding in 1754. With its impressive list of notable alumni, including three US Presidents and dozens of Nobel laureates, it's no wonder why many prospective students are wondering how to get into Columbia University.

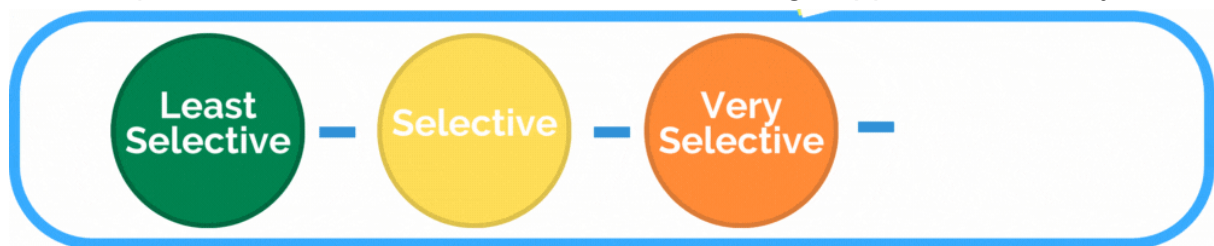
Columbia is known for its diverse student body and rigorous academic programs across a wide range of disciplines. Columbia also boasts an exceptional faculty of world-renowned scholars and researchers who are at the forefront of their fields. With its renowned **Core Curriculum** that emphasizes interdisciplinary thinking, Columbia encourages students to explore a variety of subjects and make connections across disciplines.

A quick note on college rankings: we think they're generally a bad way to think about where you should go to college. We talk about **why rankings are bad in greater detail [here](#)**, but essentially, a lot of college rankings don't actually tell you whether you and the school would fit well together, or that the school is someplace you'll thrive. That said, we also understand that many students/families are confused regarding and have questions about aspects of the application

process, so we've built the post below to hopefully clarify things, so students/families can make informed decisions.

HOW HARD IS IT TO GET INTO COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY?

It is extremely difficult to get accepted to Columbia. The grade point average of people who get accepted to Columbia almost universally places them in the top tenth of their class. People who successfully get into Columbia also tend to have impressive extracurricular activities and college applications essays.



COLUMBIA ACCEPTANCE RATE

The Columbia **acceptance rate is 3.9%**, making it one of the most competitive universities in the world. Acceptance rate is an indication of how competitive a school is, but it is also an indication of how popular a school is. So needless to say, to get into a school like Columbia, you will need to excel in almost every major college application factor.



COLUMBIA EARLY DECISION, EARLY ACTION, REGULAR DECISION, AND TRANSFER ACCEPTANCE RATE

Columbia's regular decision acceptance rate is 3.9% because it received 57,129 applications and **accepted 2,246 students**. There's no mincing words here—Columbia is a very selective university.

Columbia's early decision acceptance rate is about 11% because. The school received 5,738 early decision applications for the 2022-2023 application cycle. While the early decision acceptance rate is still very competitive, it's

important to acknowledge that there has been a **9% decline** in early decision applications in this cycle compared to the previous admissions cycle.

Columbia's transfer acceptance rate is 14.7% because it received 3,039 applications and accepted 448 students. Columbia is one of the few Ivies whose **transfer admissions rate** is higher than its first-year acceptance rate.

GPA REQUIREMENTS TO GET INTO COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

The recommended GPA requirements to get into Columbia is likely a 4.0, or very close to it. Though Columbia doesn't publish GPA info of its applicants, it's safe to assume you will need an incredibly high GPA and will likely be graduating at the top of your class in order to meet Columbia's admissions requirements. If your GPA is lower than suggested at the time you apply, you may have to perform above average on your standardized tests. If your grades aren't as high as they could have been due to life experiences or hardship, you should consider writing about it in your **additional information section**.

COLUMBIA UNWEIGHTED GPA REQUIREMENTS



HIGH SCHOOL CLASS RANK DISTRIBUTION FOR COLUMBIA'S ACCEPTED STUDENTS

Class Rank Distribution	Percent Admitted
Percent in top tenth of high school graduating class	95.7%
Percent in top quarter of high school graduating class	98.4%
Percent in top half of high school graduating class	100%
Percent in bottom half of high school graduating class	0%

Percent in bottom quarter of high school graduating class | 0%

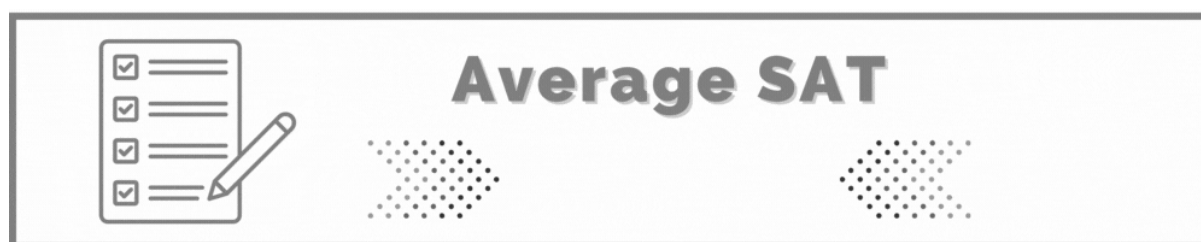
WHAT GPA IS REQUIRED FOR COLUMBIA?

Applicants' GPA when applying to Columbia should ideally be between 3.9 and 4.0 to be strong candidates. Though it may be possible to gain admissions with a lower GPA, it will mean that other aspects of your application will likely need to be notably impressive.

SAT REQUIREMENTS TO GET INTO COLUMBIA

The recommended SAT requirements to get into Columbia are a 1490 to 1560 composite score, combining the reading and writing, and math sections together. You will need an incredibly high SAT score in order to get into Columbia. If your SAT is lower than suggested at the time you apply, you may have to perform above average on your other standardized tests or have spectacular extracurricular activities to compensate. If your grades aren't as high as they could have been due to life experiences or hardship, you should consider writing about it in your [additional information section](#).

Columbia is a "Test Optional" school, meaning it does not require standardized test scores, but will consider them if submitted. It's up to you whether to submit your scores or not. On their [website](#), Columbia notes "*students are at no disadvantage in our process if they do not submit scores from these tests.*" There are a number of factors to consider as you make this decision, and you can read more about them [here](#).



COLUMBIA AVERAGE SAT COMPOSITE SCORE: 1525

SAT Score Distribution	Reading %	Math %
700-800	88%	95%
600-699	11%	5%

500-599	1%	0%
400-499	0%	0%
300-399	0%	0%
200-299	0%	0%

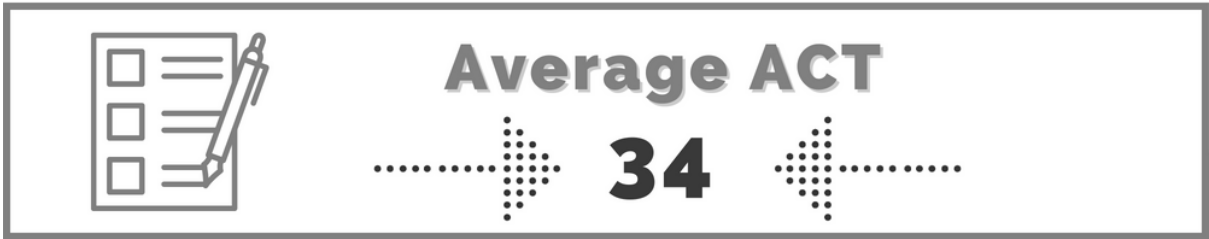
WHAT SAT SCORE IS REQUIRED FOR COLUMBIA?

Applicants should score between **1490 to 1560** on their SAT to be strong candidates for admission to this school. Having less than this will require compensating by using a substitute ACT score or having an above-average GPA.

ACT REQUIREMENTS TO GET INTO COLUMBIA

The recommended ACT requirements for Columbia are a **34 composite score combining all English, mathematics, reading, and science sections**. You will need an incredibly high score in order to get into Columbia. If your ACT is not what you'd hoped by the time you apply, you may have to make it up by getting above-average scores on the SAT and having an above-average grade point average. If your ACT wasn't as high as you'd like because of difficulties or hardship, you should consider writing about it in your additional information section.

COLUMBIA AVERAGE ACT: 34



ACT Score Range	Composite Score %
30-36	99%
24-29	1%
18-23	0%

12-17	0%
6-11	0%
Below 6	0%

WHAT ACT SCORE IS REQUIRED FOR COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY?

Applicants should score between **34 and 35 on their ACT** to be strong candidates for admission to this school. Having less than this will probably require compensating by using a substitute SAT score or having an above-average GPA.

WHAT DOES COLUMBIA LOOK FOR IN STUDENTS?

The biggest thing Columbia focuses on is **how well matched a student and the school are together**: they've **directly stated** that that is what drives their selection process. Yes, having competitive grades and test scores is important. But most students who get rejected from Columbia have those kinds of scores—you need to show how you and the school will make a great match.

How do you know if Columbia is the best match for you? And how do you demonstrate to the school that you are the best match for the school?

Start by exploring Columbias's mission and values, both through its **mission statement** and through what it outlines in its discussion of the school's **community** and what it **seeks in students**. Notice, for example, how often the focus is on a *strong sense of purpose* and a *desire to effect change*: Columbia wants to work with students who aspire "to advance knowledge and learning at the highest level and to convey the products of [their] efforts to the world."

How do you see yourself aligning with this mission and these values? What parts of your story demonstrate that you have already worked toward these things, and that Columbia is the place for you to take your next steps? How can you leverage the resources at Columbia to make a meaningful impact in your field and in the world?

How else can you demonstrate that you and Columbia fit together? Think about your answers to these questions:

How have you demonstrated leadership skills, and how can you apply those skills to contribute to the Columbia community?

In what ways have you pursued academic excellence beyond just getting good grades, and how will you continue to do so at Columbia?

Where have you shown a commitment to making a difference in your community, and how will you carry that forward at Columbia?

How have you navigated challenging situations, and what did you learn from those experiences that In what ways have you pursued your passions and interests, and how will you continue to explore those at Columbia?

How have you engaged with diverse perspectives and communities, and how will you contribute to creating an inclusive environment at Columbia?

How do you envision using the resources and opportunities at Columbia to achieve your goals and make a positive impact in your field and in the world?

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY APPLICATION DEADLINES

The Columbia application deadline for regular decision is January 1.

Columbia also provides an alternative form of application in addition to regular decision: early decision. **The application deadline for Columbia's early decision is November 1.** Below is a table showing the deadlines for each of the steps of Columbia's admissions process.

Notification Plan	Application Material	Application Deadline
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Early Decision	Submit Application and Test Scores	November 1
	Submit Financial Aid Application	November 15
	Admissions Decisions Released	Mid-December
Regular Decision	Submit Application and Test Scores	January 1
	Submit Financial Aid Application (if still pending)	February 15

Admissions Decisions Released

Early April

COLUMBIA EARLY DECISION, EARLY ACTION POLICY

Columbia's **Early Decision** admissions is a binding commitment to attend the University. *If admitted, you must withdraw all other applications and accept [Columbia's] offer of admission.*

COLUMBIA SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY PROMPTS

To complete Columbia's supplemental essay requirements, applicants must complete 6 essays. Their prompts are below and the Columbia supplemental essay guide that they were sourced from can be found [here](#). In addition, consider listening to a Columbia admissions officer discuss [helpful tips](#) for the writing supplemental.

PROMPT #1

List the titles of the books, essays, poetry, short stories or plays you read outside of academic courses that you enjoyed most during secondary/high school. (75 words or fewer)

PROMPT #2

We're interested in learning about some of the ways that you explore your interests. List some resources and outlets that you enjoy, including but not limited to websites, publications, journals, podcasts, social media accounts, lectures, museums, movies, music, or other content with which you regularly engage. (125 words or fewer)

PROMPT #3

A hallmark of the Columbia experience is being able to learn and live in a community with a wide range of perspectives. Tell us about an aspect of your own perspective, viewpoint or lived experience that is important to you, and describe

how it has shaped the way you would learn from and contribute to Columbia's diverse and collaborative community. (200 words or fewer)

PROMPT #4

Why are you interested in attending Columbia University? We encourage you to consider the aspect(s) that you find unique and compelling about Columbia. (200 words or fewer)

PROMPT #5

Please tell us what from your current and past experiences (either academic or personal) attracts you specifically to the areas of study that you noted in the application. (200 words or fewer)

PROMPT #6

In Columbia's admissions process, we value who you are as a unique individual, distinct from your goals and achievements. In the last words of this writing supplement, we would like you to reflect on a source of happiness. Help us get to know you further by describing the first thing that comes to mind when you consider what simply brings you joy. (35 words or fewer)

HOW TO GET INTO COLUMBIA—ESSAY TIPS

For more comprehensive guidance on how to craft your Columbia essays, check out the [College Essay Guy blog post](#) written specifically for Columbia's supplemental essays. Below, we'll provide you with big-picture guidance for tackling these essays. Let's dive in.

Though the six different prompts may be a bit intimidating at first, don't panic—there's actually quite a bit of overlap between three of these prompts and prompts you're likely being asked to write for other schools. **Let's look at those first.**

Prompt three is essentially a "[Community](#)" Essay. What they want to get a sense

of with this prompt is how you participate in communities of which you're a part. There's two bits of nuance here that will require a *bit* more specificity than a more-typically community essay:

they want you to discuss the ways in which the concept of "diversity", broadly defined, inform your interactions with communities, and they want to get a sense not just of how you *participate in* communities, but how you "contribute" to them.

Prompt four is essentially a "**Why Us**" essay. The goal here is not to articulate why Columbia is The Greatest School of All Time, but to argue why you and Columbia are a *perfect fit* for one another. While all of these essays are great opportunities for you to prove that you have what Columbia looks for in applicants, this essay, in particular, could be a great opportunity to highlight overlapping values you share.

Prompt five is the final common prompt, and it's essentially a "**Why Major**" essay. You might consider the origins of your interests as kind of mini-movies. If you were going to create a film showcasing your interest in Political Science, for example, where would that film start? Are you on the floor of a Model UN conference advocating for something? Are you fervently arguing something over a shared meal with friends / relatives? The key here is to use examples to prove your interests, and to write a bit about how Columbia's program in Political Science (for example), specifically, is the perfect program for you.

So if those are the more-conventional prompts, let's take a look now at the others. **Prompts one and two** both ask for lists. Now, you may be asking yourself, "can it *really* be a list?" We're here to say that yes, it can. In fact, that's what they specify.

Lastly, we have that 35-word **prompt number six**. Now while it may initially sound cliché, we're going to push you to do something the prompt is tacitly asking for here: be yourself. Before you more-cynical types roll your eyes too far, consider what's objectively being asked of you here. They want a mere 35 words about something that "makes you happy." Though we can't say this with certainty, we'd like to assure you that these 35 words aren't going to be the most-important words of your application. To be clear, this isn't an invitation here to simply goof off, but to keep the task in context; try and reflect deeply and specifically on what brings you happiness, and winnow that down to 35 words (i.e., do not simply just say something like "soccer", for example).