**Set your own trend and create your own club**

If you check out the “Clubs and Activities” bulletin board at your standard American high schools, you will likely see the same offerings: math club, science club, newspaper, yearbook… more of the same. While you stand there in front of the bulletin board, bored with your options, admissions officers are doing the same thing with countless applications. When it comes to top colleges, admissions officers are used to seeing student council officers, yearbook editors, and presidents of math clubs. As a student, you may expend massive amounts of energy in an attempt to become an officer in one of these clubs, but for what?

You know what would be really impressive? To found your own club, recruit members, and then become an officer of that club– that will set you apart on your application as not only a leader, but also a go-getter. It may sound like a lot of work, but starting your own club is easy following these steps:

1. **Choose your club** Your club should be specific but not too specific. In other words, you want the club to reflect your interests, but you also want other people to join your club. Ideas for clubs include computer programming, creative writing, young doctors, or certain political activism groups.
2. **Get approved by administration** Usually, this is the simplest part! Talk to your school secretary and ask for an application form. Ask one of your teachers to sponsor your group so that you have a classroom to meet in, obtain the appropriate signatures, and boom! Now you have your very own club.
3. **Recruit members** Tell your friends, put up some posters, get the word out on the morning announcements– whatever it takes!
4. **Run for office** Honestly, if you take the initiative to start a club and get members, then your peers will likely be willing to vote you into a leadership position. Do it! Leadership positions are always impressive.
5. **Create a project** If possible, turn your club into an opportunity to accomplish an actual project, whether it’s collaborating on a research paper, implementing a community service initiative, or completing a building project. Having an actual product to show for your efforts is critical.

It may sound scary or unconventional, but starting your own club is much more impressive than simply joining one. It shows tremendous initiative, motivation, and most of all, interest in your subject. Starting your own club is a must-do for any serious student applying to a top college.

**Dead weight: Seven extracurricular activities that aren’t as great as they tell you**

As we have mentioned a number of times in our articles, choosing extracurricular activities that fit into your overall theme is a critical exercise. However, it seems to be a popular misconception that some extracurricular activities are all-purpose, classic, or good for all future majors and career paths. Unfortunately, this is not the case! Consider the following “classic” extracurriculars that may be doing you more harm than good.

**Model UN**Model UN is fantastic for students seeking a future in diplomacy, public policy, or politics. However, it can be time consuming, travel intensive, and competitive. Before you devote all that time and energy to preparing and traveling, consider the extent to which Model UN supports your theme.

**Debate** Joining the debate club is a great way to get used to public speaking and forming and delivering arguments. But much like Model UN, debate is time intensive and competitive. While it is true that award winning debaters can make compelling candidates for top colleges, if you’re not at that top level, your time is probably better spent on different ventures.

**Community Service** Community service for community service’s sake is a beautiful thing. Community service for the purpose of padding your resume in order to appear involved is transparent, expected, and to be honest, cliched. If you choose to build a community service project, it should be specific, genuinely intentioned, and a big time investment with tangible benefits or results. Christmas carols in the retirement home or picking up waste on the side of the road should be services done from the heart and are better left off of your resume.

**Internship/Work experience**If the experience is related to your major of choice, it could be a good use of your time. If it is for the purpose of extra cash or simply for the experience of working, then it is not the wisest time investment and can often prove distracting to an otherwise diligent student.

**Theater**The performing arts are great for building confidence and blowing off steam but if you aren’t planning to go to college for the arts, then all those hours of rehearsal and theater class should be refocused.

**Music** As with theater, music takes many years of patience, practice, and diligence to become good. While music is a wonderful and enriching activity, it is not so helpful for getting into college for an unrelated field of study.

**Journalism**Are you going to school to be a journalist? If not, then you should forget about the school newspaper or yearbook. While journalism provides good exposure to different types of content, it is also time consuming and unrelated to most other majors.

Now, just to be clear, students involved in these activities are better off than students who have no activities. However, you’re involved in these clubs, your applications may be in danger of just fitting in with the crowd and not getting noticed.

In order for you to be noticed at big name Ivy League schools, you need to specialize your application with a theme, and choose appropriate, unique activities, such as creating a blog, writing a research paper, and founding lesser and more prestigious clubs like Amnesty International, FBLA, DECA, etc..