



Five College Admissions Regrets (and How to Avoid Them)

By Kevin McMullin, Collegewise Founder and President

Many families who've been through the college admissions process look back on that time with regrets. But their hindsight can be your foresight if you're willing to learn from their experiences. Here are five of the most common college admissions regrets and how to avoid them.

1. Failing to seek the right advice

You can avoid almost all common college admissions regrets by seeking the right advice, which always starts by [visiting your high school counselor](#), ideally well before you begin completing applications. The right advice almost never comes from people who [don't know what they're talking about](#) or who don't have any [skin in the game](#). Seek out the advice and don't wait to do it.

2. Not applying for financial aid

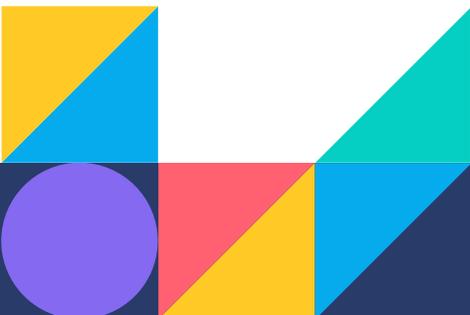
There are a lot of reasons families make this mistake, ranging from simply not realizing when the necessary applications are due, to making erroneous assumptions about their eligibility for aid, to misbelieving that simply applying for aid could hurt their student's chances of admission. This is an easy regret to avoid—just apply for aid. Don't make excuses, don't put it off, don't resolve to worry about how to pay for college later. Just visit the financial aid section of each of your chosen colleges' websites and follow the instructions to apply for need-based aid. Here's a [past post](#) for senior families concerned about costs, and [another](#) that broadens the advice to all grades of high school.

3. Cutting deadlines too close

Every year, countless families lament how stressful the process was simply because their student was frantically completing applications and essays right up until the deadlines. Impending deadlines heighten stress, they make it more difficult for students to relax and focus on the task at hand, and they're a primary cause of parent/student head-butting (see #5). Instead, [start before you have to](#). [Work steadily](#). Then finish early. I promise you won't regret it.

4. Leave some time to sleep on it.

Reach schools are those where your chances of being denied are greater than your chances of being admitted. Some students believe that the best way to improve their chances is to apply to as many of those reaches as possible. But that lottery logic doesn't work, it increases stress, and inevitably leads to a student receiving far more bad news than good. Even the dean of admission at Harvard [believes](#) that approach is a bad idea. A better approach? [Balance](#) your college list.



5. Parent/student head-butting

I know that parent and teenage head-butting isn't limited to college applications. But the college version is easier to avoid. Families can start by agreeing to let the student [drive the bus](#). Students, if you want your parents to step back and let you handle it on your own, remember that [trust begets more trust](#). And parents, here's a [past post](#) with five links to help you do your most important jobs well during this time.

Want more expert application tips from Kevin? Check out his blog at wiselikeus.com.

