



You didn't get into college...

What to do next

First, manage the initial disappointment

Acknowledge your feelings, and let yourself grieve (just a bit).

- College rejection letters feel awful and sometimes hurtful. Allow yourself a couple days to grieve the loss—cry, wallow, and even shred/burn your rejection letters.
- Just try not get stuck in “What ifs” - These can drive you crazy! And make sure you don't let yourself get wrapped up in feeling bad for *too long*. Grieve, but then *move forward*.

Try to remember: **It's not personal.**

- A college rejection is not a rejection of *who you are*. Your college app didn't 100% represent all the facets of who you are and what makes you great.

...and then make a plan to move forward

Still go to school, just a *different one*.

- **Take community college classes, and then transfer:** If you have your heart set on a four-year college, you can always just start taking general education classes at a local community college and then transfer to a four-year college later. This is pretty common: 1.4 million students change colleges each year. Plus, going this route could save you money!
- **Apply to rolling-admissions universities:** There are some colleges that accept applications throughout the summer or have “rolling admissions.” So it might not be too late to apply and still start a four-year college in the Fall.
- **Attend a trade/vocational school:** There are alternate paths to your career goals. For instance, if you want to become a lawyer, maybe you could attend a technical school to first become a paralegal, and then eventually apply to law school. Or maybe you want to instead focus on a non-academic trade, to become an electrician or police officer.



Take a gap year.

- **Think of this as an opportunity:** Use your gap year to take classes; learn a new skill or trade; volunteer, intern, or work; or travel.
- **Strengthen your application for the following year:** Speak to a counselor or college admissions officer if you need help figuring out what would help. Maybe improve your academic record by taking classes at a local community college or re-taking the SAT/ACT.



You got into college...

What to do next

...if you got into 1 college / your top-choice college



Make sure you can pay for it

- **Submit your FAFSA®, CSS Profile, state aid forms, etc:** Make sure you've submitted all the forms you can, to receive the maximum government and institutional aid. Find out if your college has any scholarships with their own applications.
- **Apply for external scholarships** using sites like [Going Merry](#), Fastweb, or Bold.org
- **Consider appealing for more aid.** If you didn't quite get enough financial aid, or if your family finances have changed, consider sending in an appeal letter to request more money. [Here's a guide to financial aid appeals.](#)
- **Take out student loans, if you need them.** Max out on federal government loans first (those are usually cheaper), before seeking private loans. Get rate estimates from various companies, to find the best option for you. [Here's an informative article](#) on how loans work.



Stay on top of remaining documents & deadlines

- **Accept your admissions:** Most colleges have a deadline (often in May/June) for when you need to accept your admissions and/or pay a deposit to secure your spot.
- **Submit required documents** like your final high school transcript, ID, financial aid documents, or proof of vaccination.
- **Keep track of other deadlines**, like when to sign up for orientation or apply for student housing. Often all this info is communicated both via email and in your student portal.

...if you got into multiple colleges



Decide on the right one

- **Consider the experience:** What matters most to you about your college experience? Do research to assess which college can help you best achieve that. You can potentially attend multiple student orientations to help you further decide.
- **Consider the money:** Compare costs of attendance and likely post-graduation salary. Which college represents the best return on investment?
- **Talk it out:** Chat your friends & family. You might also want to speak to current or former students at each college, or visit campus to speak to professors or administrators.



You didn't get into your top college...

Tips on handling your rejection letter



Acknowledge your feelings, and let yourself grieve (just a bit).

- Maybe you had gotten really excited (or even confident) about the school, and now it won't happen. That feels awful and sometimes hurtful. So allow yourself a couple days to grieve the loss—cry, wallow, and even shred/burn your rejection letter.
- Just try not get stuck in “What ifs” - These can drive you crazy! And make sure you don't let yourself get wrapped up in feeling bad for *too long*. Grieve, but then *move forward*.



Try to remember: It's not personal.

- Almost every senior receives at least one college rejection letter, so you're not alone. For many, it's just one (unfortunate) part of the college process.
- It doesn't mean you didn't deserve it. At many colleges, there are more deserving applicants than there are available spots.
- A college rejection is *not* a rejection of who you are. Your college app didn't 100% represent all the facets of who you are and what makes you great.



Get excited about your acceptances.

- Most students who didn't get into their top-choice college end up still enjoying the school they *do* attend.
- If you were accepted by another (or even several other) colleges, get excited about those other options. Read through their websites, to remember what you liked about those schools and why you originally applied to them. Speak to students about why they like the college. Even buy a college t-shirt or water bottle, and start feeling the school spirit!



Remember the logistics ahead.

- In addition to *emotionally* moving forward, remember that there are likely a bunch of *logistical* things you still need to do too, like accept your admissions, pay a deposit fee, submit required documents, and keep track of deadlines ➡ to apply for student housing or attend orientation.
- Beyond just *getting admitted*, you also need to think about *paying for college* 💰 - Make sure you have a college financial plan (yes, #adulting). For most students, this plan is a combination of grants/scholarships, family contributions, personal savings, student loans, and a part-time job. Make sure you have all of that lined up!