

FINDING

— *and keeping* —

YOURSELF

THROUGH THE

COLLEGE

ADMISSIONS PROCESS



A GUIDE TO THIS WORKBOOK



THINK

The ability to reflect on your experiences is an important skill for both life and learning. The “Think” section of this workbook will provide you with questions to guide your reflection. Take a few minutes to consider each prompt before moving on to the next section.



LOOK
AHEAD

College applications can be complex and multifaceted. The “Look Ahead” section of this workbook will provide you with additional guidance for completing segments of the application, as well as time saving tips to make the process of applying a bit less daunting.



WRITE

Committing your thoughts and ideas to paper will give you something concrete to go back to when you lack inspiration. The “Write” section of this workbook will provide you with questions to answer and tasks to complete that will be useful in the college admissions process.



Overwhelming. Stressful. Time-consuming. Disheartening. These are some of the words most often used by students to describe the college admissions process when it first begins. And while applicants do experience all of these emotions at points throughout the process, in retrospect many students report that the college process enhanced their self-reliance, confidence, and executive functioning skills.

In hopes of supporting you through whatever emotions this process presents you with, we have created this reference guide to reinforce the work you've already done and remind you of the most important college admissions task: keeping your self and your needs at the center of this process.

WHO AM I?



You know yourself better than anyone else. Instead of trying to figure out what type of candidate a college or university is looking for and straining to fit that mold, spend a few moments writing down what special interests, unique hobbies or skills you have. The most appealing candidate to a college is someone who knows what they can offer and can speak about their interests with confidence. Having an awareness of what makes you unique will benefit you tremendously.



THINK

“What am I offering to schools?” as opposed to
“What does this school want me to be?”



LOOK
AHEAD

Which part of the application allows me the most room to highlight my interests/personality? The essay/s? An interview? Recommendations? My course list/transcript? (Make sure to spend additional time or attention on whatever area you identify.)

WHO
AM I?





What are some of my unique hobbies/interests/talents?

A large rectangular area with a teal border, containing horizontal lines for writing. At the bottom center of this area, the text "WHO AM I?" is written in teal, uppercase letters. Below the text is a teal semi-circle containing a white question mark, which is part of a larger graphic element at the bottom of the page.



What aspect of my personality/character will serve me best in this process?

A large rectangular area with a teal border, containing 18 horizontal teal lines for writing. At the bottom center of this area, there is a teal circular icon containing a white question mark, with the text "WHO AM I?" positioned above it.



WHAT DO I WANT?



There is so much focus on getting IN to a college that many students forget this process is about getting THROUGH college; it's about what a school can offer you for the next four years and beyond. In order to find a school that will be the best match for you now—and later—it is important to reflect on what you really want or need from a college. If you have been participating in a specific sport, activity, or organization throughout high school, it is essential that you determine whether or not you want to continue pursuing that particular interest, and what accessing it will look like at your future institution.



How do I spend my free time? Think about both social and solitary activities. Will these be supported on campus, off campus, or both?

Which resources do I use on a regular basis to keep myself happy and healthy? These might include religious or community organizations, mental health services, tutoring or learning support, or even proximity to your family.



LOOK AHEAD

Where will I live, work, and play?

- What housing arrangements are most suitable to your needs and what does the college offer?
- Will you have a job throughout college? Will this be on or off campus?
- What restaurants/theaters/museums/activities do you use regularly, and will these be accessible to you at college?

WHAT DO I WANT?





A large rectangular area with a green border, containing 18 horizontal green lines for writing. At the bottom center of this area, the text "WHAT DO I WANT?" is written in green, above a circular icon of two hands holding a small green plant with two leaves.



HOW CAN I GET WHAT I WANT?



Even before you've typed a single word into an application, you've already completed the majority of tasks that are required for admission to college: Congratulations! Many students get so caught up in the process of applying to college in 12th grade that they forget all of the amazing things they've accomplished since the start of high school. It is the work you've done grades 9 through 11 that will constitute the bulk of your application; find a way to celebrate this, and to highlight your many accomplishments throughout the application process.

Since college admissions is a deadline-oriented process, using your time wisely is of the utmost importance. There are many aspects of the application itself that can be completed ahead of time, but perhaps the most important time-management skill is using the time you have productively instead of spending it in the world of worry and "what ifs". Below are some recommendations for how to use your time as effectively as possible.



What resources do I already have? When it comes to writing college essays, some students spend an exorbitant amount of time sitting and trying to think of the perfect topic. Instead, look to your posts and photos on social media for inspiration, or keep a running log of ideas on your phone or computer so you can document them as they come to you.



LOOK AHEAD

Work on what you know. Fill out the personal data/profile section of applications as soon as they become available to you.

Let your presence be known. Be the one to arrange college tours, interviews, and communicate with college admissions departments instead of having your parents/guardians do it. This will allow you to establish a relationship with college representatives early on so you won't have to spend time doing it later in the process.

HOW CAN I GET
WHAT I WANT?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sarah A. Sterling is a Licensed Social Worker who teaches at The Shipley School in Bryn Mawr, PA. As a College Counselor and Instructor of Social, Emotional and Ethical Development, Ms. Sterling endeavors to lessen the emotional impact of the college admissions process and help students successfully transition into the next phase of their lives.

This workbook was designed and edited with help from Janet M. Kobosky and Melissa Tassoni.



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