

# College Bound: Finding the Right Fit

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# Tonight

## Applies to anyone

- Cover some basics of applying to college
  - dates, roles, and pitfalls
- Simple roadmap for high school
  - Year by Year

## Specifics for ASD students

- Programs: where to start
- To disclose or not, and when
- Resources (books):
- Myths



## Who are we?

Golden Educational Consulting seeks to inspire young people to find out what inspires them.

We do that teaching families how to prepare their kids for the journey of the college search.

We provide ultra-personalized one-on-one college search coaching, teaching, and educational assessment to families.







## GEC and Autism Tennessee

We provide college coaching support to students on the autism spectrum

We are an approved provider with Autism Tennessee





## Roles & who does what?

**Student:** The lead in charge - applicant in chief

**Parents:** Sets parameters & boundaries (e.g., budget, must-haves, can't-haves, etc.), encouragement

**School professionals (guidance/college counselor):** provides support and facilitates documentation from the school (transcript)

**Teachers:** guidance and letters of recommendation (if applicable)

**Educational Consultant/Coach:** Provides personalized resources and support to the family and applicant, can fill in gaps in knowledge with specializations





# The Roadmap:

## 9th & 10th Grades

- Pick appropriately challenging courses
- Do the best you can in them
- Engage in activities you enjoy
- Many students indicate they "started" seriously considering college in late Sophomore year



# The Roadmap:

## 11th Grade

Fall:

- Start visiting campuses (even informally)
- Sit for PSAT (important for consideration for National Merit Scholarships)

Winter:

- Identify most appropriate ACT preparation
- Complete "net tuition" calculators at a sample of schools

Spring:

- Sit for TN ACT
- Spring Break: official visits/program (especially if there is a school being considered for early decision)





# Do you want this?





# The Roadmap:

## 12th Grade

Summer Prior:

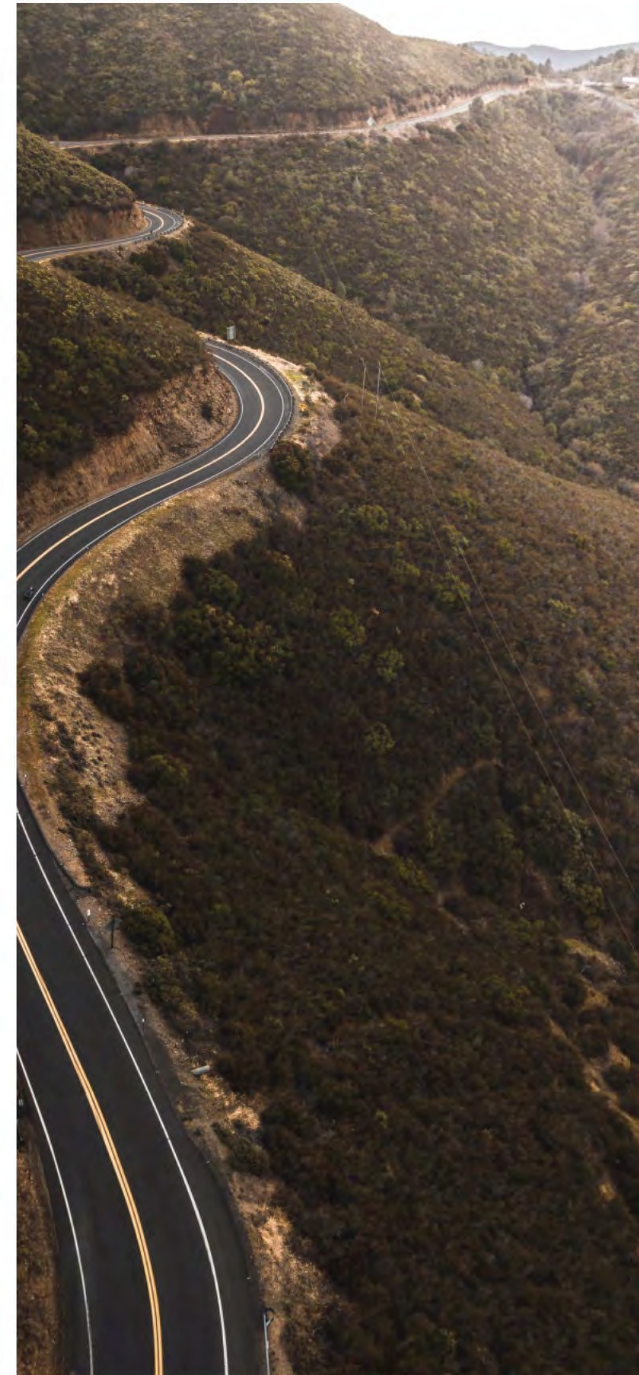
- Write application essays
- Continue visits
- Retake ACT/SAT if needed

Fall:

- Start completing applications
- Submit by preferential/priority deadlines
- Early Decision/Early Action?
- Submit FAFSA/Scholarship applications

Spring:

- Enrollment deposits due by May 1



## Standardized Testing

ACT: 215 questions, 2 hours & 55 minutes

- English - 75 questions in 45 minutes
- Mathematics - 60 questions in 1 hour
- Reading - 30 questions in 35 minutes
- Science - 30 questions in 35 minutes
- Optional Essay

Score Range 1-36, a simple average of the 4 subtests

Fee: \$49.50-\$58.50

Fee waivers are available based on family income and/or guidance counselor documented request

Terminology: superscore = taking the top score on subtests across multiple test dates





## Standardized Testing

SAT Reasoning: 154 questions, 3 hours & 55 minutes

- Reading: 52 standard multiple-choice  
Writing: 44 standard multiple-choice
- Math: 45 standard multiple-choice, 13 student-produced response
- Optional Essay

Fee: \$47.50-\$64.50

Fee waivers are available based on family income and/or guidance counselor documented request



# Applications

## Common Application

- Accepted at nearly 700 colleges
- Complete one application & send it to multiple schools

## Universal College Application:

- Accepted by 33 colleges
- Complete one application & send it to multiple schools

## Coalition Application:

- Accepted by 52 colleges
- Complete one application & send it to multiple schools
- You can start using this platform as early as 9th grade

## College Specific applications:

- Some colleges only accept their own homegrown application

Don't forget supplements!



Teacher  
Scores  
Resume  
Counselor  
Video  
Interview  
test  
Transcript  
Audition  
Standardized  
Subject  
ACT  
AP  
supplement  
Admissions  
SAT  
Essay  
recommmendations  
Art





# The College Essay



# Essay:

## Common Application Prompts (Circa 2019-20)

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
2. The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?
3. Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?



# Essay:

## Common Application Prompts (Circa 2019-20)

4. Describe a problem you've solved or a problem you'd like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma - anything that is of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution.

5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.

6. Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?

7. Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.





## Supplemental Essays/Writing: The decidedly uncommon

Have you ever walked through the aisles of a warehouse store like Costco or Sam's Club and wondered who would buy a jar of mustard a foot and a half tall? We've bought it, but it didn't stop us from wondering about other things, like absurd eating contests, impulse buys, excess, unimagined uses for mustard, storage, preservatives, notions of bigness . . . and dozens of other ideas both silly and serious. Write an essay somehow inspired by super-huge mustard.

*From the University of Chicago's Uncommon Application 2005-2006*



# Affordability & Scholarships

## Types

**Grant Aid:** assistance money you do not have to pay back (consider it more like a discount)

2 types of grant aid:

1. Merit-based scholarships: based on some skill or achievement
2. Need-based scholarships: based on your family's ability to pay for college

**Loans:** (parent & student; subsidized & unsubsidized)

**Self-Help:** J-O-B, either while at school or over the summers

**Stipends:** for books, study abroad, volunteering project, etc.



# Most important equation:

Cost of Attendance (COA)  
(minus)  
Estimated family contribution (EFC)

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TOTAL FINANCIAL NEED





A hand holding a glowing lightbulb against a sunset background. The lightbulb is the central focus, with its filament visible and glowing. The background is a soft, out-of-focus sunset with warm orange and yellow tones. The title text is overlaid on the lightbulb.

# Setting the Right Mindset



Rejected



Barrack Obama  
(Skidmore)

Meredith Vieira  
(Harvard)

Tom Hanks (M.I.T.  
& Villanova)

Tiny Fey  
(Princeton)

Sergey Brin (M.I.T.)

Ted Turner  
(Princeton &  
Harvard)

Tom Brokaw  
(Harvard)

**AND**

Warren Buffett  
(Harvard School of



Business)





# Teaching the messy art of adult decision making

- Think back to when you taught them to drive
- Expectation: this is a family process
- Student is the driver
- You are getting out the car at some point
- Install college discussion ground rules:  
College Sundays



# **The college search is not about the college, it is about the search.**

The challenge of taking stock of oneself, and exploring, weighing, and ultimately choosing the best option.





# The college search and ASD



# Terms: Autism Spectrum Disorder

## DSM-V Criteria:

1. Deficits in social-emotional reciprocity, nonverbal communicative behaviors
2. Restrictive and repetitive patterns of behaviors, activities, or interests
3. IEP or 504 Plans

The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) allows students to remain in services at the high school.

We are talking about less severe/high functioning autistic students who will apply and enroll after 12th grade.





# Five things to focus on:

1. Standardized testing
2. Finding the right college
3. Disclosure in the application process
4. Transitioning
5. Resources



## Standardized Testing and ASD

Both ACT and SAT do allow for requests for accommodations.

Common accommodations:

- Extra time (up to 5 hours)
- Small group test settings
- medical supplies or food in the test room
- Different test format (e.g., braille)

Specific diagnosis documentation required is often extensive,  
**so start early (2-3 months prior to test dates)**



## Finding the right college

- Growing number of colleges that feature ASD-specific support services (40+):
  - Western Kentucky University - Kelly Autism Program
  - UTC's MOSAIC Program
  - Austin Peay's Full Spectrum Learning (FSL) program

<http://collegeautismspectrum.com/collegeprograms>



## Finding the right college

Where to start?

Student Services/Disability Offices

No luck?

Admissions Office

No luck?

Red flag







## Disclosure

- During application process?
  - Can be empowering for the student
  - Make sure you have a sense the campus is inclusive of neurodiversity
- After being admitted?
  - disclose to the student services/disabilities office
- After enrolling?
  - Housing Office? Yes!
  - Academic Advisor? Yes!
  - Medical professionals? Yes!
  - roommate? Personal preference
  - professor? Personal preference



## Disclosure in the essay:

"At the suggestion of my college counselor, I attended a summer program at Landmark College in Vermont, which focuses on high-functioning students with learning differences. There I learned how to organize my thoughts, use the way my brain works more effectively, and how to interact better with both my instructors as fellow students. I left Landmark with a better understanding of myself and the tools I needed to maximize my performance going forward.

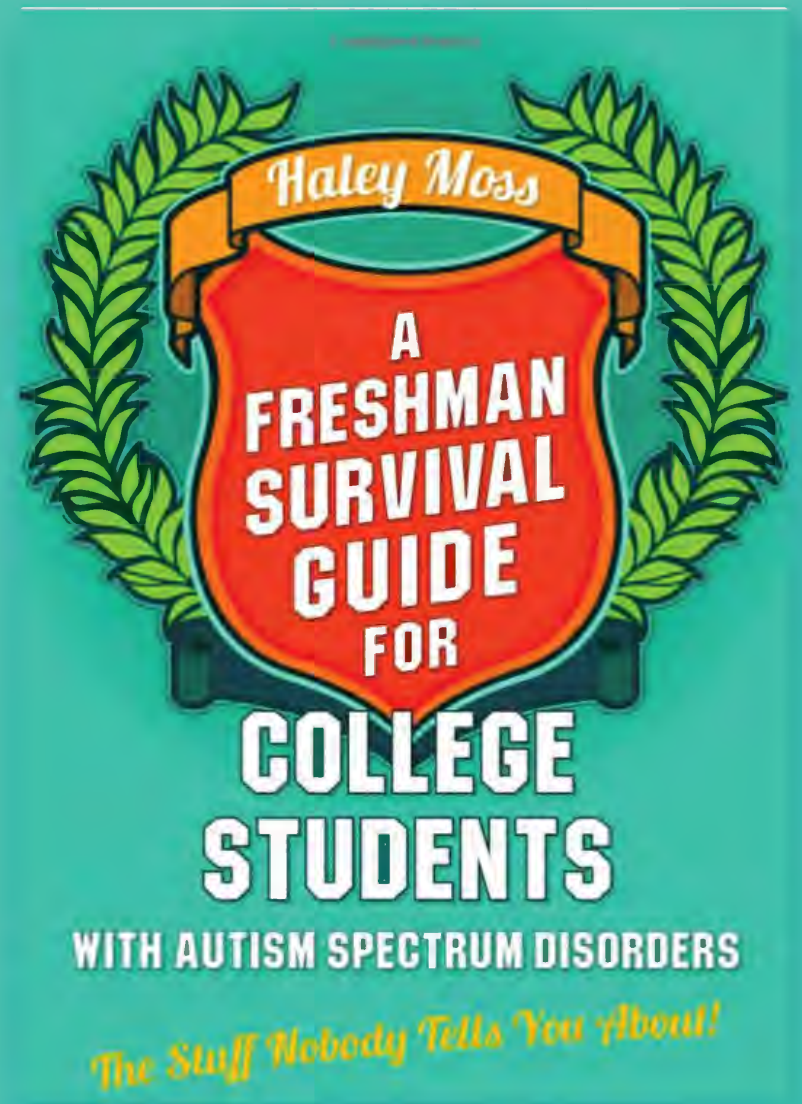
It has been like learning to walk all over again. First, baby steps and then waddling a bit. It has been a process, but I know I am now running with better form and with more speed than ever before. My academic performance began to rise again by April of sophomore year, and I currently feel that my grades are rising toward my potential. "



## ASD student transition to college:

- Routines
- Surroundings
- Social support
- Continuity in medical and/or psychological support
- Housing & roommate conflict

Book recommendation ----->





## Resources:

Books:

**The Parent's Guide to College for Students on the Autism Spectrum**, by Jane Thierfeld Brown Ed.D., et al.

**Realizing the College Dream With Autism or Asperger Syndrome: A Parent's Guide to Student Success**, by Ann Palmer

<http://collegeautismspectrum.com>

<https://autismtennessee.wildapricot.org>

<https://www.doctorthom.com>



## Let us know how we can help

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