



DANNY RUDERMAN'S

ADMISSION MASTERCLASS

YOUR GUIDE

WELCOME



Thank you so much for picking up this guide!

For the last 15 years, I have been blessed to help thousands of families just like yours find, apply, and get into great colleges. Yet, every year, I meet teenagers who are more stressed, more overwhelmed, and more afraid they won't get into a "good" school. My goal has always been to show students how being authentic, discovering their true interests, and doing less often results in more acceptances and a more enjoyable life.

My approach has been considered revolutionary because it runs counter to commonly-held beliefs about how college admissions works and why students get accepted. I feel blessed that families from all over the world have placed their trust in me to help their children navigate the admission process. I am also proud to say that, year after year, my students have gone on to great colleges that truly match who they are as people.

Given that I am the first in my family to attend college and the third to get accepted to Stanford from my urban, public high school, I now want to fulfill my mission of helping as many families realize the incredible opportunities available.

Danny

PART 1

3 Little-Known, Unconventional Strategies That Gain Admission Into Top Colleges Better Than Anything Else (a.k.a. “The Tale of Two Students”)



A few years ago, I had a student. Let’s call her Katie. Katie had exceptional grades (all As) in mostly AP and Honors classes. She had a 1540 on the SAT. She had a lot of extracurricular activities, including being the managing editor of the newspaper, being the president of a community service club, and playing varsity tennis.

She applied early to Tufts because she was interested in its International Relations Program.

That same year, I had another student. Let’s call him Kevin. Kevin actually went to the same school as Katie. He was a good student, but he was not at the top of his class. He had mostly As and A-s with a few Bs, especially in his freshman year. Kevin played JV soccer, but his real interest was writing. He excelled in his English classes, and he wrote everything from short stories to screenplays. His favorite author was Kurt Vonnegut.

He also applied to Tufts early because he wanted to major in English and Creative Writing.



The Result?

Kevin got accepted. Katie did not. Wait, what??

To understand what happened, we have to dig a bit deeper. Katie had better numbers and was clearly involved. However, she was applying into one of Tufts’ most competitive programs and was up against other girls whose profile looked a lot like hers.

On the other hand, how many teenage boys do you know who love to read? I don’t see many of you raising your hands out there... The fact is that Kevin stood out because very few boys want to major in English. On top of this, Kevin got an exceptional letter of recommendation from his English teacher, sent in several of his articles that had been published in newspapers like *USA Today*, and wrote one of his application essays on his love for Vonnegut’s *Slaughterhouse 5*. In fact, the admissions officer wrote on his acceptance letter, “I’m taking a chance on you because of your essay on Vonnegut.”

Oh and Katie? *She got into Wesleyan and loved every minute of it.*

Great Danny, but what's your point?

I'm so glad you asked.

Over the last 15 years, I have personally helped thousands of students get accepted into great colleges. Over this time, I have repeatedly seen what kinds of students colleges accept (especially selective colleges) and why certain students get accepted while others do not, even when they appear to look the same "on paper." While there are many factors that contribute to a college acceptance, including grades, test scores (most of the time), quality of classes, activities, recommendations, and essays, there are 3 little-known strategies that not only produce the best acceptance results, they also produce the most interesting *and authentic* students. These strategies are based on the following ideas:



#1 It's not about doing more, it's about being **INTERESTING**

The key is to help your child discover a genuine interest and then come up with ways of pursuing that interest in, well, interesting ways. So if a boy likes cars, maybe he makes a photo blog where he takes pictures of exotic vehicles. Maybe a girl contacts robotics professors at a local university to ask about working in their labs in the summer. Or maybe two friends write a musical. The bottom line is that colleges like to see commitment & authenticity.



#2 To become interesting, students need to maximize **TIME**

What about all the time taken up by sports, theater, and saving the whales, you ask? Believe me, I get it. However, it's still possible to maximize time so a student can spend 3-10 hrs/week on another genuine interest. To do this, I advise what is considered blasphemous: take fewer hard classes and drop anything that a student doesn't love or isn't necessary. I'm not saying kids shouldn't challenge themselves. But if that one AP US History class is taking up 4 hours/night, be strategic. If anyone could join that club, then it doesn't really stand out, right?



#3 It's all about finding the best **MATCH**

The guy in the picture is named Evan Spiegel. He is an ex-student of mine. Oh yeah, he also started Snapchat. Evan didn't think he could get into Stanford because, while he was a good student, he was not at the top of his class. What he didn't realize, however, was that his 4-year's worth of graphic design work perfectly matched to Stanford's Design program. One of the reasons he got in was because his interests matched to what Stanford offered. Make sense?

PART 2

The Keys to Choosing Classes Throughout High School (a.k.a. “There’s no need to stress.”)

Does this remind you of anyone you know?



On a regular basis, students (and their parents) often feel the pain of trying to decide which classes to take in high school, especially when some schools restrict students from taking a certain number of advanced classes or won't let student accelerate, even when they are acing an easier class.

OR...some students are trying to take on everything and stressing out so much, the dog no longer wants to be in the same room with any of you.

So just how does your child pick a schedule that is balanced and also give him/her the most opportunities for college?

The key is to ask some questions:

1. How selective are some of the colleges to which my son/daughter may want to apply?

I understand that your teen may not know yet. However, Princeton will look for a more rigorous course load than will Chapman University (and I love Chapman!). Parents—you can call the admissions office of any college and/or talk to your school's counselor to find out what kinds of courses were taken by past students who were accepted.

2. How long is it taking your child to do his/her homework now?

Some students take 45 minutes to learn what might take others 3 hours. Many students bite off more than they can chew, which will end up causing stress, sickness and worse grades. It's not really about whether it is better to get an A in an AP/Honors/IB class vs getting a B in a regular one. It is about creating a schedule that is balanced, where students are challenging themselves but not killing themselves. Having said this, I typically advise students to try a harder class and then drop down because they often can't go back up.

3. What are your child's academic interests and strengths?

Going back to the AP U.S. History example I used on the last page. If a student loves history and wants to study social justice in college, it might be worth taking the AP History class with the hard teacher to demonstrate his/her abilities (and get a recommendation). However, if a student likes math/science, it might be wise to take regular history along with harder STEM classes.

The bottom line? Students should talk to older students and find out the best teachers/best work load and strategically plan classes based on their interests and their colleges' selectivity level.

PART 3

How to pursue interesting & authentic extracurricular activities in the summers (a.k.a. “Think BIG and outside the box.”)

I recently had a guitar playing student who was interested in music production.

Yet, when I started talking about summer opportunities, he said he would probably just follow in his dad’s footsteps and go into the hotel business. I asked him, “If you could intern with anyone in the world, who would it be?” He mentioned 2 music producers. We started asking everyone we knew and emailing the producer’s assistants. After 6 weeks, they agreed to have him move furniture for 1 day. We then sent a thank you email, stating that he was available to do any activity, any time after school or in the summer. They invited him back to help set up a studio, and on the 3rd day, my student met the producer who, unbeknownst to us, had been mentored himself when he was 19.

Cut to 2 years later, and my student has gone to the Grammys with the producer, and he spent the summer on tour with Ed *freakin’* Sheeran. He also got into the Clive Davis program at NYU!

What can you learn from this?

1.

First, please do not think that every student has to invent a laser or write a novel. It is absolutely fine to do a summer program, take a summer school class, get a job (I love when students get jobs!), volunteer, go abroad, practice ice skating all summer, or get an internship in a parent’s law firm. There is no “right” or “wrong” activity. Colleges typically don’t require community service or only accept Eagle Scouts. And like with choosing classes, the more selective a college, the more they are looking for students to stand out; however, if a teen cannot connect with a famous music producer and simply uses Ableton Live in his/her room, this is okay too.

2.

BUT, students have NO IDEA what adults will do to help them at their age if they simply ask, ask, ask, ask, ask, ask, ask. As with my student example, it is about thinking BIG and being PERSISTENT. One of my favorite things about my job is helping students pursue their interests, not only because it will help them get into great colleges but also because it teaches them what is possible and gives them a vision for what their lives can be. So if your child wants to learn the saxophone or try to get an internship at a video game company or take a photography class at a community college or build an A-frame house in the backyard (this happened), the best kind of activity is one where the student independently initiates it. In other words, it is not whether going to a college summer program is a good idea, rather, it is what a student does with the training once he/she is done!

PART 4

When to take the ACT and SAT and how to get the highest score in the least amount of time (a.k.a. “Knowledge is Power.”)

Question 42:

2 students, a typical boy and a typical girl, have to take the ACT. Who will get to his or her desired score first?

- A. The girl because girls are typically 2 years more mature than boys, have a vision for college, and will do the required studying where a boy will procrastinate.
- B. The boy because, unlike girls who often face more test anxiety, boys understand that students have up to 7 times between Jan of 11th grade and Dec of 12th grade to take the test, so they don't stress (although they do keep putting off *really* studying).
- C. Both because the boy and the girl have read this page and learned that the key to improving their scores quickly is to take real practice tests and spend serious time reviewing their mistakes to discover their brains' tendencies.
- D. Neither because both realize there are over 1300 'test optional' colleges in the U.S. and after looking at the list at fairtest.org, they don't study at all.

Answer: All of The Above

PARENTS:

Here are the avail. dates to take the tests:
(during junior and senior year)

ACT:

Dec, Feb, Apr, June, July, Sept Oct

SAT and Subject Tests*:

Dec, Mar, May, June, Aug, Oct, Nov

Most students will start studying between the summer and Feb of 11th grade. BUT 60-80% of students I have ever seen will need 3-4X to get the score they want. And this won't typically happen until fall of 12th grade for a variety of reasons, some I mentioned above. So breathe deeply because it may take a while. It will be ok.

STUDENTS:

All forms of tutoring work— 1-1, class, online, book—it is just about knowing yourself and how you learn best.

The best thing (maybe ever) is getting the score you want early and being done. So yes, you should put in the time now. Having said this, very few get the score they want the first time, so be patient with yourself, as it usually takes time.

The BIG SECRET (even if you've got a tutor), is to practice on sections from past real tests and go over your mistakes. If you get angry at yourself, it is a good sign. It's called 'active learning,' and it works.

*** 99% of all colleges (even selective ones) no longer require the Subject Tests. So check first.**

PART 5

Danny's Favorite Resources

(a.k.a. “Wow, this guy might actually know something.”)

The links below should work, but I will also email this list for easy reference.

FINDING COLLEGES

[Fiske Guide to Colleges](#) - Good book for learning about schools

www.youvisit.com - Place to go to for virtual college tours (they are adding schools all the time)

www.unigo.com - Place to go to learn what students have to say about colleges

[The K&W Guide to College Programs and Services for Students with Learning Differences](#)

MASTERING THE ACT/SAT/SUBJECT TESTS

www.collegeboard.org - Place to go to register for the SAT and search for colleges

www.actstudent.org - Place to go to register for the ACT

[The Official SAT Study Guide](#) - Best place for real practice SAT Tests

[The Official ACT Prep Guide](#) - Best place for real practice ACT Tests

[The Official Study Guide for All SAT Subject Tests](#) - Best place for real practice SAT Subject Tests

GETTING FINANCIAL AID AND SCHOLARSHIPS

www.finaid.org - Place to go to learn everything about financial aid

[The Ultimate Scholarship Book](#) - Place to go to find unique scholarships.

LEARNING MORE FROM DANNY

www.admissionmasterclass.com/emailroadmap - **Weekly Email Roadmap**

Yep, I have created a way to walk you and your family through the process so you never miss a deadline, as well as continue to get timely guidance of what to do when throughout high school.

Every Sunday night, a nifty little email will arrive that contains the exact steps I use with my personal students. Best of all, I create 4 different messages each week for 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grade families.

Sincerely, I want to help as many families as possible and even the playing field in college admissions. I hope you have gotten a lot from this guide, and I look forward to hearing your success stories down the road!