

Students Offer Solutions for Common College Application Mistakes



By Cathryn Sloane

Students applying to college experience immense pressure when trying to avoid making large, critical mistakes on their applications. Understanding how to recover from these mistakes, should they occur, is another stress trigger in and of itself.

A slight oversight is sometimes inevitable, especially given the overwhelming number of tasks thrown at students during the admissions process. It is thus crucial that high school students learn the best ways to salvage their applications in the event of such missteps. Here, three college students -- and tutors with Varsity Tutors -- share their application missteps and how they made up for them.

Mistake 1: Waiting too long to request recommendations

Eric Holakiewicz, a senior at Marquette University, says obtaining letters of recommendation was one of his weaker points during the application process.

"I procrastinated this task until it became difficult to find a good candidate," he says. "Teachers are busy during the school year and need a bit of time to put one of these letters together for you. This is especially true when these teachers have many other students approaching them to write letters as well."

The solution: Enhance other areas of the application

Holakiewicz says putting extra effort into his admissions essays helped make up for the fact that he didn't prioritize the recommendations highly enough.

"Putting a lot of time into my college essays helped a great deal in the long run," he says. "The essay was my opportunity to let the admissions counselors get a glimpse of who I am and what I do."

Mistake 2: Rushing through the applications

Thomas Riley, senior at the University of Texas--Austin, says he committed the notorious mistake of procrastinating when it came to his various application tasks. He notes that he left much of the work for the last few weeks before his deadlines and "immediately regretted" the decision.

"Not only did I find myself having to rush to fill out the extensive applications required by different schools, I also discovered that in regards to competitive schools, your best chance of being admitted comes when you submit your applications early," he notes.

While this may not always be the case with every school, Riley found it to be an obstacle that could have been prevented in his situation.

