

Tips from the Experts: What to Do If You Get Put On The Waitlist



Students and parents usually have a good idea of how to proceed if they receive an acceptance or rejection from a top-choice college. But what should families do if an applicant is put on the waitlist?

As high school seniors across the globe weigh their admissions decisions, it can be difficult to navigate the process when the decision isn't as clear-cut. Being waitlisted is a gray area; you're not rejected, but it will be much later in the spring before you learn if you have been accepted. It's necessary to take into account that the chances of being admitted off the waitlist at a

highly selective college are pretty slim. That being said, it's not impossible.

How the waitlist works

Before taking steps to get off the waitlist, it's important to first understand exactly what the waitlist is and how admissions officers go about admitting students from it.

During the admissions process, colleges must predict how many students will ultimately enroll. With more students applying to more colleges than ever, this can be difficult to forecast. The waitlist is comprised of students who are just as qualified as the admitted class – there just weren't enough spots available to admit them and also manage the predicted yield (that is, the percentage of admitted students who enroll). As enrollments come in, the admissions office will look at how many students are attending in the fall and determine if there are enough students to fill the class and meet the school's institutional needs. If there are spots available after all the enrollments are in, colleges will go to the waitlist to admit additional students that fit its needs for that class year.

It's important to realize that the waitlist isn't a ranked system with a number one student who will be the first

to get a spot as soon as one opens up. As they do when building the initial admitted class, admissions officers will look at the school's institutional needs and decide whom to admit from the waitlist based on those factors. For example, if the school expected more engineering students to enroll than the actual number of students who matriculated, they may go to the waitlist and admit select engineering applicants to fill those spots.

What to do next if you get waitlisted

1. Decide if the waitlist school is still your top-choice college.

Being placed on the waitlist can be a gut-check for many students. After the initial excitement of other acceptances, a waitlist decision could put a top-choice college out of the running for some students, and that's okay! Feelings about schools can change throughout the course of the college admissions process, especially as decisions come in. If you receive a waitlist decision, take time to consider if that college is still a top choice. Remember that many waitlist acceptances don't come until the end of the spring or even in the early summer, so students will have to decide if they're

comfortable with waiting that long to receive a final decision. Weigh the pros and cons and make an informed decision before enrollment deadlines. Once you've made your decision, make sure to take the appropriate steps to inform the college whether or not you intend to remain waitlisted. This may require a written response, a call to the admissions office, or accepting a spot online in an applicant portal.

2. Secure your spot at another school.

As mentioned before, many waitlist decisions don't come until much later in the spring or summer, well after the May 1 enrollment deadline for many colleges. Taking into account the low percentage of students accepted off the waitlist, it's smart to go ahead and accept a spot at one of the best-fit colleges that did accept you. Don't worry – accepting an admission offer at another college will not hurt your chances of being admitted off the waitlist. Colleges realize that students need a place to go in the fall and will not penalize someone for accepting a spot somewhere else while waiting to hear back on a waitlist decision. Weigh your acceptances without factoring in the waitlist college. If you applied to a balanced list of colleges you should be

excited to attend any of the colleges where you were accepted. Get excited! Make an informed decision and send in your enrollment deposit before the deadline.

3. Reiterate your interest in the waitlist college and update the admissions office on what you've done this past semester.

Many times after accepting a place on the waitlist, colleges will encourage students to give the admissions office a little more information about what they've been doing since they submitted their applications. This can include anything from final grades and AP test scores, to updates on extracurriculars, community service, academic interests, and more. This is also your opportunity to reiterate your commitment to the college and articulate that you intend to enroll if accepted. This factors into demonstrated interest, as the college will want to admit students that want to enroll. Explain why that college is still your top choice and how you intend to contribute to the campus community if admitted.

4. Proceed like you're not waiting for a waitlist acceptance.

After accepting your spot and informing the college of your continued interest, there isn't much more you can

do other than wait to hear if you've been accepted. This is where it's important to have realistic expectations and focus your energy on the college in which you've enrolled. Spend your summer operating as if you're not waiting to hear back from another school. Attend orientation and freshmen events at your new college. Network with other students and get excited about the future! Neglecting the college where you did accept a spot will only set you up for disappointment should you not get into your waitlist college.

5. If you are accepted, reevaluate your options.

If you do get word later this spring or summer that you've been accepted off the waitlist, congratulations! Your diligence and patience has paid off. Again, take some time to consider the offer and whether or not your feelings have changed. After some time and preparing to attend another college, you may not want to attend the waitlist college after all – and that's okay, too! Sit down with your family and discuss your options. There is some cost involved, as you may have to forfeit any enrollment and housing deposits you've already put down at another school, but it may be worth it in the end if you get to attend the college of your dreams after

all. If you decide to accept the spot off the waitlist, inform the college and send in your deposit. Then let your alternative college know you will not be attending in the fall after all. If you decide not to accept the spot off the waitlist, let the college know so they can offer the spot to someone else ASAP.

Tag: high school, wait list, college, students, parents, University